

Safe Spaces and
Campus Protest

◆ Annie Dillard
Reads Her Mail ◆

Rebecca Solnit
Visits Death Row

HARPER'S

HARPER'S MAGAZINE/MARCH 2016 \$6.99

AMERICA'S BEST IDEA

In defense of our public universities

BY MARILYNNE ROBINSON



◆

THE FEDERAL AGENCY THAT KILLS BALD EAGLES

BY CHRISTOPHER KETCHAM

DRONE WAR! VEGANS VS. HUNTERS

BY JAY KIRK

“THERE COULD BE NO MORE
IMPORTANT OR TIMELY BOOK.”

—Doris Kearns Goodwin

“TIMELY
AND
INSPIRED.”

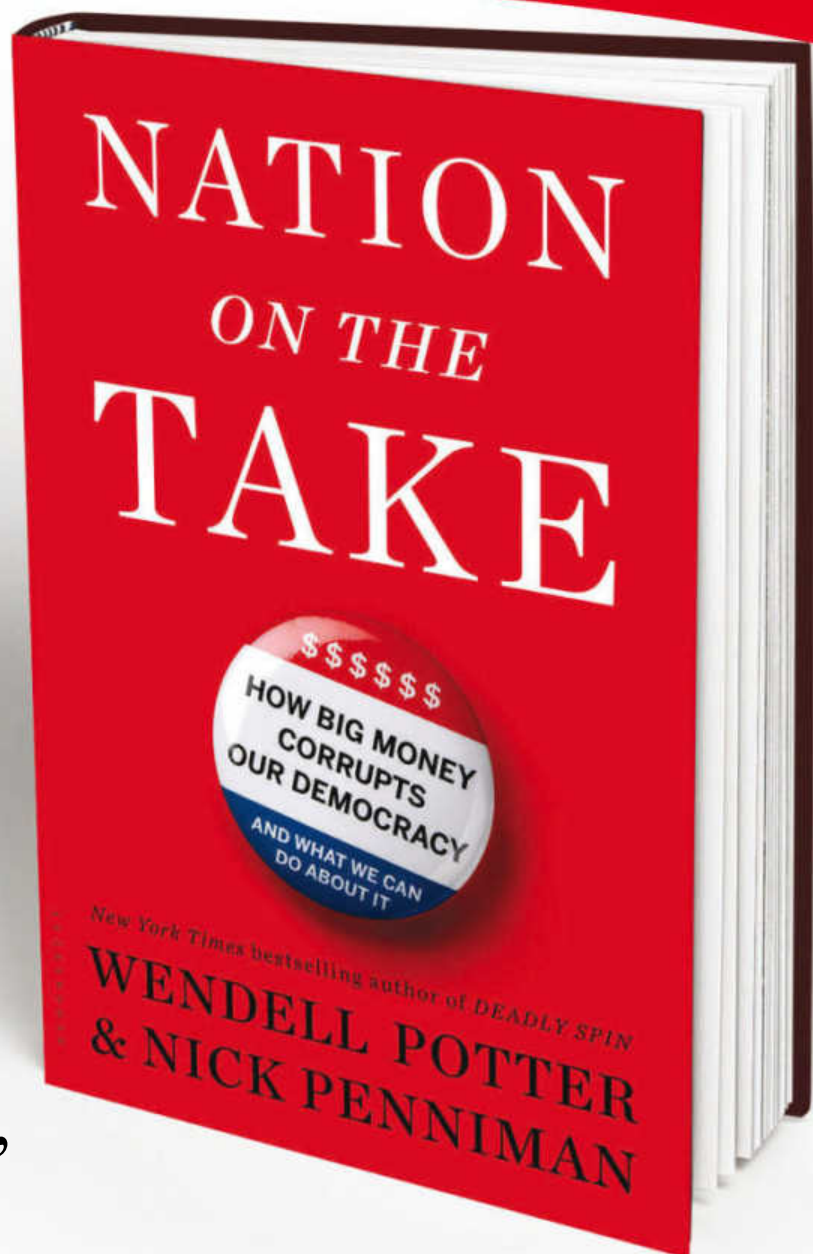
—Arianna Huffington

“POWERFUL.”

— Senator Alan Simpson,
R-WY

“HOW EACH
OF US PAYS A
PRICE...FOR
THE RUNAWAY
POLITICAL
MONEY GAME.”

— Hedrick Smith,
author of *Who Stole the
American Dream?*



*How we can save America from
the corruption that is destroying
our democracy.*

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HARPER'S

M A G A Z I N E

FOUNDED IN 1850 / VOL. 332, NO. 1990

MARCH 2016

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LETTERS

Editor's Note

This month we are introducing three changes to the regular format of *Harper's Magazine*. In the Readings section, the usual found documents and fine art are accompanied by a thematically linked collection of original essays; the result should combine the vigor of the Forum with the humor of Readings. A new rubric, Scene, will showcase short reported features, with an emphasis on clear, lively writing. Finally, we have the first in a quarterly series of long poems chosen and introduced by our new poetry editor, Ben Lerner.

Trafficking in Stereotypes

Most people equate human trafficking with sex trafficking—criminal networks sexually exploiting women and girls for profit. That is clearly a heinous crime. But Vanessa Gregory ["The Lottery," Annotation, January] reveals an insidious and perhaps even more common form of human trafficking that operates unbeknownst to both the public and the justice system: labor trafficking. Foreign guest workers are exploited by factories and construction sites; housekeepers are forced into domestic servitude; children are coerced into peddling goods door-to-door. Victims suffer financial, psychological, physical, and, often, sexual abuse. At first glance, these cases appear far less menacing than sex trafficking, but they involve men, women, and children who are being held hostage by debt, poverty, and power. This power is often wielded with impunity, because the traffickers are individuals, small businesses, and corporations that claim to provide workers with legal job opportunities.

The Signal International case is a powerful example of the systemic exploitation of human beings for profit under the guise of legitimate business and labor practices. Signal's business practices underscore the need for labor

trafficking to receive the same attention as sex trafficking, starting with stronger protections for workers and earlier interventions by enforcement agencies.

Katherine Kaufka Walts

Director, Center for the Human

Rights of Children

Loyola University

Chicago

Friendly Fire

Andrew Cockburn's "A Special Relationship" [Letter from Washington, January] weaves together the threads of fundamentalist jihadism and U.S. policy in a timely way. The United States fails to appreciate the consequences of its involvement in overseas conflicts, to understand that today's proxies and surrogates hold agendas that could tomorrow render them adversaries, or to recognize that allies such as Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey are pursuing geopolitical interests not consonant with our own.

These complexities pose a challenge to those now seeking the presidency, most of whom advocate deeper U.S. involvement in multidimensional conflicts. They also point to the fundamental analytical shallowness of neocon strategies that rely on military strength in the absence of historical understanding.

Edmund McWilliams

Retired Senior Foreign Service Officer

White Oaks, N.M.

Harper's Magazine welcomes reader response. Please address mail to Letters, Harper's Magazine, 666 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10012, or email us at letters@harpers.org. Short letters are more likely to be published, and all letters are subject to editing. Volume precludes individual acknowledgment.

Andrew Cockburn depicts a White House that is bent on regime change in Syria, despite a *New York Times* report from October 2013, which stated that from the beginning, "Obama made it clear to his aides that he did not envision an American military intervention." Cockburn suggests that the eventual intervention was part of a master plan concocted by the Saudis to thwart Shiite influence in the region. But such a plan does not square with the invasion of Iraq, which resulted in the rise of a Shiite regime that has alienated Sunnis so much that they have come to see the Islamic State as a lesser evil in Anbar province. This is to say nothing of the Pentagon training program for Syrian rebels, which required trainees to agree in advance that their weapons would be used only against the Islamic State, not against the soldiers of Bashar al-Assad. If this is a proxy war, it is not a very good one.

The White House has been far more determined to punish Al Qaeda, through its drone attacks in Afghanistan and elsewhere. The sad truth is that the most effective intervention in Syria has come from Assad's allies. Iran, Russia, and Hezbollah have now joined forces with the Baathist military to destroy non-Islamic State rebels who took up arms after peaceful protesters were attacked by government snipers. The failure of Cockburn to acknowledge the scorched-earth tactics of this unholy alliance is regrettable.

Louis Proyect
New York City

Andrew Cockburn responds:

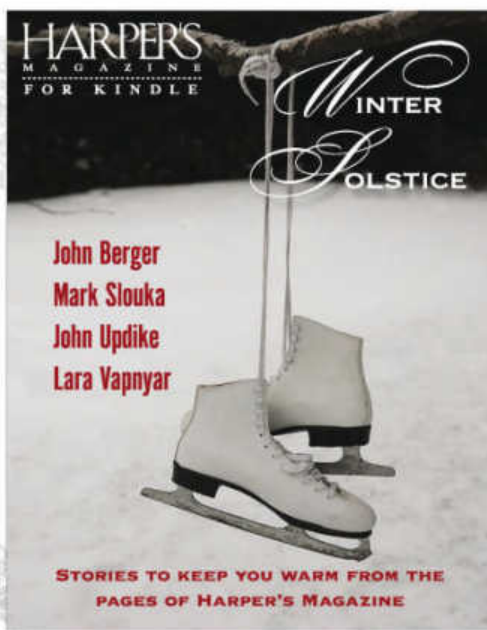
Louis Proyect's string of misconceptions usefully reflects the added thinking of the administration, its allies, and the media, which has done so much to prolong Syria's agony. Obama forswore as politically impossible military intervention (excepting the anti-Islamic State air campaign) in Syria. Instead he opted for covert action, in collusion with regional allies, that was aimed at displacing the Assad regime. Since he and other administration officials

Continued on page 94

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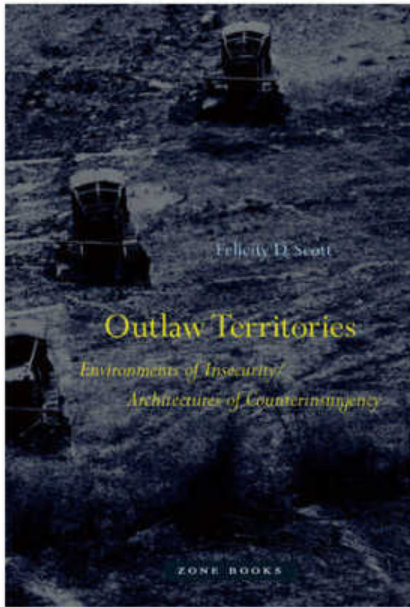


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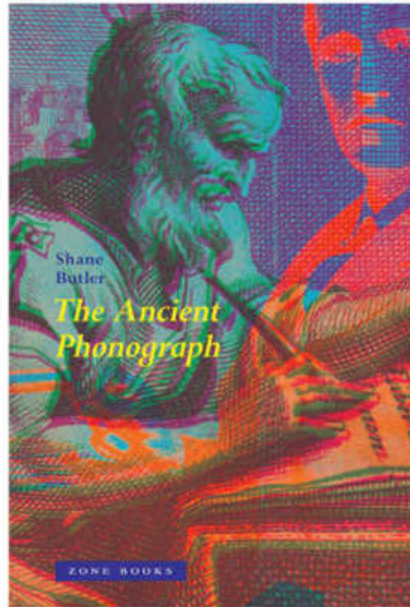


Outlaw Territories

BY FELICITY D. SCOTT

"Like an antidote to amnesia, Scott's meticulous, granular research vividly recreates the political weather of the 1970s. Here is a sidelined architecture history that returns as a missing link of those networks, technologies, media, and advocacies of global governance that are of most consequence today."

—KELLER EASTERLING, YALE UNIVERSITY

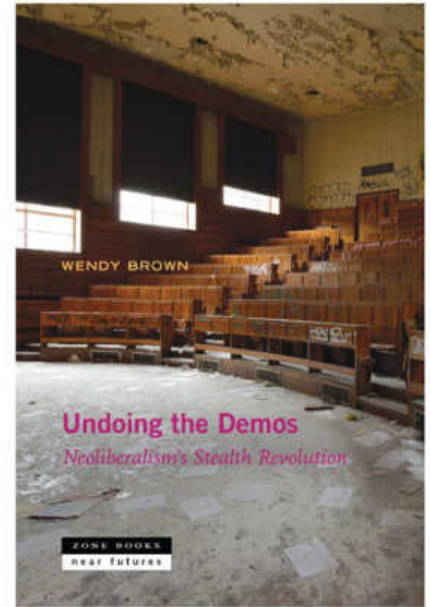


The Ancient Phonograph

BY SHANE BUTLER

"*The Ancient Phonograph* defamiliarizes contemporary assumptions not just about the voice but about the very mainsprings of meaning and interpretation... Butler is a superb guide to this vocal literary culture, and to our own. His ear is pitch-perfect."

—JAMES I. PORTER, UC BERKELEY



Undoing the Demos

BY WENDY BROWN

"Brilliant and incisive... a book that deserves to be widely read."

—BOOKFORUM

"A searching inquiry... part historical study, part philosophical treatise, and part engaged polemic."

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ISSUE #1: EUROPE AT A CROSSROADS examines the confluence of migration and austerity politics in Europe. Including interviews with Yanis Varoufakis and Wolfgang Streeck; photographs by Alessandro Penso; films by Laure Vermeersch and Rendueles + Sola; and articles by the New Keywords Collective, Vincent Berthe, Jeremy Gilbert, and Brigitte Young.
www.nearfuturesonline.org

EASY CHAIR

Bird in a Cage

By Rebecca Solnit

There are two things I think about nearly every time I row out into San Francisco Bay. One is a passage from Shankar Vedantam's *The Hidden Brain*, in which he talks about a swim he once took. A decent swimmer in his own estimate, Vedantam went out into the sea one day and discovered that he had become superb and powerful; he was instantly proud of his new abilities. Far from shore, he realized he had been riding a current and was going to have to fight it all the way back to shore. "Unconscious bias influences our lives in exactly the same manner as that undercurrent," Vedantam writes. "Those who travel with the current will always feel they are good swimmers; those who swim against the current may never realize they are better swimmers than they imagine."

Most mornings I row out against the current, and the moment when I turn around is exhilarating. Strokes that felt choppy and ineffectual are suddenly graceful and powerful. I feel very good at what I do, even though I know that the tide is going my way.

Rowing is the closest I will ever come to flying. On calm, flat days my battered old oars make twin circles of ripples that spread out until they intersect behind the stern of the boat. I'm forever retreating from that gentle disturbance, the water smoothing itself into glass again as I go. On the calmest days, when the bay is a mirror, these oars pull me and my scull through reflected clouds in long glides, the two nine-

foot oars moving together like wings in that untrammelled space.

The birds are one of the great joys, the terns and pelicans and gulls, the coots and stilts and cormorants, who dive and fly and float, living in the air and the water and the plane between them. The freedom of rowing is enlarged by the freedom of the birds. I set out from the estuary of Corte Madera Creek as it pours into San Francisco Bay. En route I pass Point San Quentin, and San Quentin Prison.

When I row past the prison I think about currents and I think about Jarvis Jay Masters, who's been on my mind for a long time. We were born eight months apart and are both children of coastal California. We're both storytellers. But he has been in San Quentin since he was nineteen, more than a third of a century ago, and has swum against the current all his life. For the past twenty-five years, he's been on death row, though the evidence is on the side of his innocence.

Until he turned twenty-three, Masters's story could have been that of any number of poor inner-city boys: his father missing in action; his mother drawn into the vortex of heroin; his early neglect; and a ride through the best and worst of the foster-care system, which dropped him straight into the juvenile-prison system. At nineteen, he was sent to San Quentin for armed robbery. Four years later, on June 8, 1985, Howell Burchfield, a prison guard and father of five,

was murdered. Two members of a black prison gang were convicted of planning and carrying out the crime. They were given life sentences. Masters was accused of conspiring in the murder and of sharpening the weapon that was used to stab Burchfield in the heart. He received the death penalty.

In books and movies, resourceful lawyers or investigators find a subtle detail, possibly two, to undermine an otherwise credible case. But in Masters's case there aren't merely one or two weak links. So far as I can tell, the whole chain is rotten.

Major witnesses changed their testimony, and several of the prisoners who testified against Masters recanted. Some testified that they had been offered incentives to incriminate him. One star witness was so unreliable and so widely used as an informant that dozens of cases in the state had to be thrown out because of his involvement. He has recanted his testimony about Masters. The man convicted of carrying out the murder said in 2004 that Masters was innocent and that all three men on trial were "under orders from [gang] commanders that, under threat of death, none of us could discuss the [gang] in any way." Meaning that Masters faced two death penalties, and one set him up for the other.

I first read about Masters in *Altars in the Street*, a 1997 book by Melody Ermachild Chavis, who was the defense investigator for his murder trial. They have remained close for thirty years. Chavis and I later became

friends ourselves. "It was obvious working on it even way back then, between 1985 and 1990, that they had a lot of suspects and a lot of theories," she told me earlier this year. "The big mistake they made was: they destroyed the crime scene. They bagged it all up and threw it in the Marin County dump."

She described the way prisoners and prison officials got rid of hundreds of notes that had been exchanged between prisoners, as well as a large collection of prison-made knives, which had been thrown out of the cells when the prisoners realized that they were going to be searched. According to one account in Masters's mountain of legal documents, guards collected two different potential murder weapons, which they say they put into envelopes as evidence. Both disappeared before the trial.

Masters was a gang member at the time of the killing, but the gang's leaders eventually gave many reasons why it was impossible that he had sharpened the missing weapon. One was that he had voted against killing Burchfield, an act of insubordination for which he had been stripped of responsibilities. Another was geography; he was on the fourth tier of a cell block, and the murder took place on the second tier. Moving a weapon back and forth would have been difficult and dangerous, and a witness testified that the weapon never left the second tier. Most critically, someone else admitted to making it.

Masters's attorneys filed the opening brief of his appeal in 2001, after which his case progressed slowly. It was not until November of last year that the California Supreme Court heard oral arguments on the appeal. Even by the standards of California's glacial appeals process, this is an unusually long time.

Though only 6.5 percent of Californians are black, African Americans make up 29 percent of the state's incarcerated and 36 percent of those condemned to death. They are more likely than others convicted of similar crimes to receive the death penalty, and assailants of any race who

kill a white person are far more likely to be sentenced to death than killers of other victims. There are those who swim with the current and those who swim against it, and then there are those who have firehoses turned on them.

The first time I saw Masters was at a session of a 2011 evidentiary hearing. There, in the small courtroom, stood a tall, gracious man in shackles and an orange jumpsuit. A dozen or so friends and supporters were present, most of them from the Buddhist community. Since his sentencing, Masters had become a devoted Buddhist practitioner. He told me that he meditates daily and tries to incorporate teachings about compassion into his daily life among prisoners and guards. In 1989, he took vows from Chagdud Tulku Rinpoche, an exiled Tibetan lama and distinguished teacher who died in 2002. (The first vow was "From this day forward I will not hurt or harm other people even if it costs my life.") Pema Chödrön, a writer and abbess who is perhaps the best-known Buddhist in the West after the Dalai Lama, speaks of Masters with admiration, and she visits him every year.

When we began talking on the phone, a few months ago, Masters told me how much prisoners crave connection with the outside world. Buddhism allowed him to join a community of ethical and idealistic people with practical ideas about how to respond to suffering and rage. It took him outward and inward. "Meditation has become something I cannot do without. I see and hear more clearly, feel more relaxed and calm, and I actually find my experiences slowing down," he wrote in 1997. "I'm more appreciative of each day as I observe how things constantly change and dissolve. I've realized that everything is in a continual process of coming and going. I don't hold happiness or anger for a long time. It just comes and goes."

He's also connected to the outside world through his writing. He's the author of two books and many magazine essays. He told me that his essays "go out on their own wings and some of them fly back to

me." It's not the first time he's used flight as a metaphor for his own reach; the title of his memoir comes from an incident when he stopped another prisoner from nailing a seagull with a basketball in the prison yard. Asked why, he said off the top of his head, "That bird has my wings," and so the gripping, moving narrative of his early years is titled *That Bird Has My Wings*.

"You know, it's really hard to get in," I told Masters about my attempts to figure out how to move through the prison system. "It was easy for me," he replied, and we laughed. From the time I first wrote him, it took me approximately two months of bureaucratic wrangling to be able to visit him. Finally, on a cold Sunday in January, I showed up at the visitors' entrance wearing the permitted clothing and carrying what few articles I was allowed: a key, a state-issued I.D., some coins and bills for the vending machines, and a few pages of fact-checker's questions and quotes to verify, sealed inside a clear ziplock bag. I passed through something much like airport security, and on the other side, I stepped out to face a shabby jumble of sinister architectural styles. I was suddenly left alone to find my way to the visiting rooms a couple hundred yards away.

There were more doors to go through, operated by a young woman in the guard booth who let me in and took my license and pass. I entered a room in which everything except the vending machines was painted a pale buttery yellow. There were fifteen cages in which prisoners were locked with their visitors, a U-shaped arrangement with guards on the inside (where prisoners entered) and outside (where the visitors entered). Each cage was about four by eight feet, just slightly smaller than the cells the prisoners live in, and was furnished with two plastic chairs and a tiny table.

A guard wearing a heavy belt with keys dangling on steel chains locked me in the cage closest to the door through which the prisoners entered and exited. Masters arrived with his hands cuffed behind him. Once inside the cage he offered

them up to the guard to be unlocked, a gesture both had apparently engaged in so many times that it appeared utterly routine. Thus began my first face-to-face meeting with Masters. Soon afterward a stocky white man with gray hair passed by on his way out of the visiting room, and he and Masters shouted something at each other. It was a little unclear whether this was animosity or friendship, but Masters said it was the latter. The two men had known each other since being in foster care together. It was as though they'd been groomed for death row since they were little boys.

Another prisoner passed by and said that his daughter was on break from college and coming to see him. After a brief discussion with the man, Masters told me that he'd become a confidant, someone who, because of his writings and the way he conducted himself, was trusted with things that prisoners might not ordinarily share. He reminded me that he's been in prison since before some of the younger inmates and guards were born.

"I have been so blessed because I was thinking about all that could have gone wrong, that could've affected me," he told me. "All the things that didn't go wrong. I have seen a lot of tragedy, and all of those things could've been me. I've seen the violent heart, and I count my blessings that I haven't had that kind of hatred. Being on death row, I have a front-row seat on what suffering is. I'm not damaged, not had this place tear me up like I've seen a hundred times. I'm probably crazy for not being crazy. I count my blessings every day."

When I started rowing, I thought it would be a meditation practice of sorts, because so much concentration goes into the single gesture that moves you across the water. That repetitive movement requires the orchestration of the whole body, and it contains a host of subtleties in timing and positioning and force. You could spend a lifetime learning to do it right, but even as you're learning you can go miles across the water. Gradually the gestures became second nature, and I could think about other things.

Though I don't get lost in thought much. It's too beautiful.

I want to keep rowing, to keep relishing that freedom on the open water under the changing weather, going with and against the tides, but I don't need so much freedom that I can't go inside a prison on occasion. Buddhism calls for the liberation of all beings, and it's a useful set of tools for thinking about prisons and what we do with our freedoms.

We are all rowing past one another, and it behooves us to know how the tides move and who's being floated along and who's being dragged down and who might not even be allowed in the water. I bought Masters some things from the vending machines just outside the cages, which I could access and he couldn't. He asked whether I was going to eat, and I said maybe I'd get a taco after. He said, "That's freedom." He was right. Freedom to eat tacos on my own schedule, to pursue the maximum freedom of rowing, to enter the labyrinth of San Quentin and leave a couple of hours later, to listen to stories and to tell them, to try to figure out which stories might free us.

It was stories, written down by Melody Ermachild Chavis; by Alan Senauke, a Zen priest; and by Jarvis Masters himself that made me care about him and think about him and talk to him and visit him. And it was these stories that made me hope to see him leave that cage on his own wings. Meanwhile, there is a way Jarvis is already free; as a storyteller he's escaped the narratives about himself he's been given and he's made his own version of what a life means.

"Whatever the outcome, I want to be in a position to deal with that," he told me. "There are a lot of people who say, 'Jarvis, you gonna win this case.' It's the same way the other way," meaning people who say he won't win. "I'm scared both ways; I'm scared to think this way and scared that way. Do I lose sleep? Of course I lose sleep. I do have some faith in this system, I just have to. The possibility of them coming to the right decision is there. I do have faith in the outcome of this system. History doesn't give you a lot of good reasons for it. That's just my bottom line."

The MECHANICAL Horse

HOW THE BICYCLE
RESHAPED
AMERICAN
LIFE



MARGARET GUROFF

"A PROVOCATIVE, IN-DEPTH ANALYSIS OF THE TWO-WHEELER'S SHIFTING INFLUENCE ON AMERICAN SOCIETY. HIGHLY RECOMMENDED." —DAVID HERLIHY, AUTHOR OF BICYCLE: THE HISTORY



THE MECHANICAL HORSE

HOW THE BICYCLE RESHAPED
AMERICAN LIFE

BY MARGARET GUROFF

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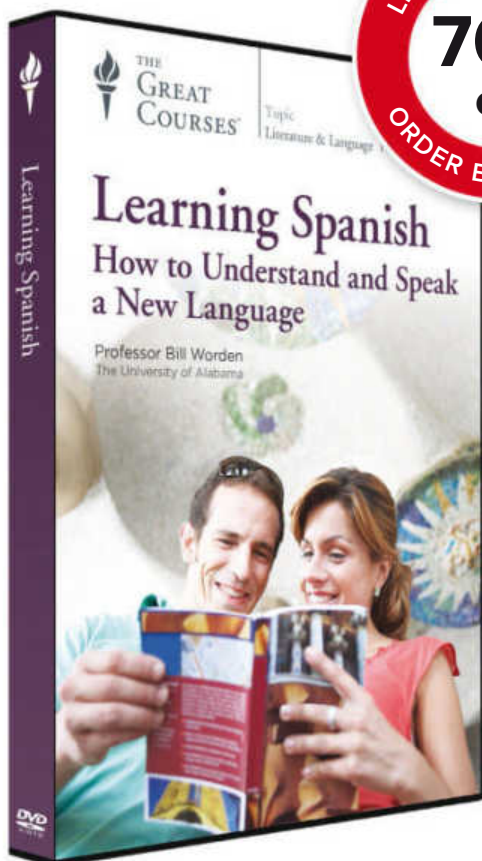
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Global Environmental Politics

HARPER'S INDEX

- Percentage of refugees resettled in 2014 who were taken in by developing countries : 86
- Amount in excess of which the cash assets of refugees will be seized under a proposed Danish law : \$1,400
- Number of refugees arrested in the United States on terrorism-related charges since 2001 : 10
- Number of natural-born U.S. citizens : 320
- Chances an American charged with Islamic State–related terrorism in the past two years was a convert to Islam : 2 in 5
- Percentage of Islamic State recruitment videos released since January 2014 that target an English-speaking audience : 4
- Portion of Americans who worry that a family member will be a victim of terrorism : 1/2
- Number of people killed by political or religious extremists on U.S. soil since September 11, 2001 : 93
- Percentage of these deaths attributable to far-right-wing political extremism : 52
- Percentage of U.S. Muslim doctors who say their religion has caused patients to refuse their care : 9
- Number of times TSA inspectors attempted to sneak fake weapons through passenger checkpoints last year : 70
- Number of those attempts that were successful : 67
- Number of people injured at a Nairobi university after a security drill was mistaken for a terrorist attack : 37
- Number killed : 1
- Average number of months it takes for a country to recover as a tourist destination after a major terror attack : 13
- After an environmental disaster : 24
- Number of active oil and gas wells on U.S. wildlife-refuge land : 1,665
- Percentage of New Jersey's state prisons that are situated in environmental-contamination areas : 46
- Estimated amount G20 nations spent in 2014 on climate-change-adaptation assistance for poorer nations : \$4,500,000,000
- On direct subsidies to fossil-fuel producers : \$77,000,000,000
- Minimum number of counterfeit 3M respirators seized by customs agents in Shanghai since 2013 : 120,000
- Estimated percentage increase in the annual number of U.S. meth-lab busts during *Breaking Bad*'s five-season run : 75
- Number of days since last October on which Kosovo's opposition party has set off tear gas in the parliamentary chamber : 6
- Percentage of Americans over 35 who believe that living in a democracy is "essential" : 55
- Of Americans aged 18 to 35 : 29
- Estimated number of years by which serving as a head of state reduces a person's life expectancy : 2.7
- Portion of U.S. retirees who return to work within two years of retirement : 1/4
- Percentage of religiously unaffiliated Americans who believe in reincarnation : 25
- Who believe that they have personally been in contact with the dead : 31
- Number of times the average American checks his or her phone each day : 46
- Percentage by which the average price of consumer goods marketed to women exceeds that of similar goods marketed to men : 7
- Date on which Japan's Supreme Court upheld a law that mandates married couples share a family name : 12/16/15
- Percentage of married Japanese couples who opt to share the husband's name : 96
- Percentage of department heads at top-fifty U.S. medical schools who are women : 13
- Who are men with mustaches : 19
- Number of U.S. universities that have been granted religious exemptions from federal rules on gender-identity discrimination : 33
- Number of U.S. universities that have opened branch campuses in Qatar's Education City : 6
- Minimum amount these universities have received from the Qatar Foundation since 2009 : \$673,000,000
- Date on which the World Taekwondo Federation changed its name to avoid confusion over the abbreviation WTF : 12/7/15

*Figures cited are the latest available as of January 2016. Sources are listed on page 70.
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20. Double Object Pronouns
21. Reflexive Verbs
22. Talking about the Past: *Acabar* and *Hacer*
23. Talking about the Past: *¿Desde Cuándo...?*
24. Formal Commands and Unequal Comparisons
25. Informal Commands
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READINGS

LAST FALL, YOUNG PEOPLE gathered in protest at dozens of universities across the country. Students of color spoke about feeling unwelcome or invisible, of being stereotyped, slighted, excluded, harassed. One deceptively simple phrase, derided or endorsed, seemed to crystallize what was at stake: “safe space.” The expression—which dates to the Sixties and was originally associated with consciousness-raising groups in the women’s movement—has been used to describe places in which members of historically persecuted groups can enjoy a reprieve from the hierarchies of the world at large and discuss their experiences without fear of censure. Some commentators viewed the protesters’ call to create safe spaces on campus—or to make universities themselves into safe spaces—as infantilizing. The world awaiting graduates, they reasoned, is unavoidably tough; better that students get used to this sooner rather than later. To others, protesters were articulating a legitimate need for environments where thoughtful treatment can be expected by all. Were students usefully encouraging discourse on campus to be more humane? Or did making academic spaces “safe” necessarily chill free expression? In the pages ahead, six writers consider the claims and counterclaims of the new student protest movements.

WEARY ORACLE

By Dawn Lundy Martin. Martin is the author of four books of poetry, including Good Stock, which will be published by Coffee House Press in 2016. She teaches at the University of Pittsburgh.

My mother, who was born more than eighty years ago, deep in the Jim Crow South, insists that she has never experienced a single moment of racism. I have never heard her say a derogatory word about white people as a race or use the word “white” as an insult. When she calls people “black,” she does not do so affectionately, to suggest kinship, community, or belonging. And she gets visibly annoyed when black people organize around blackness, as though claiming the category that is also used to disparage them were a criminal act. Why excite the ghost? Why call its hideous name? Yet when I ask her whether she remembers black people getting lynched, she says, “Yeah, they did sometimes.”

That is what race trauma looks like—although it is not reducible to that.

At Claremont McKenna College, a young woman’s voice cracks as she speaks into a megaphone handed to her by protesters who seek redress for the racial slights that they believe have been encouraged by the culture of the campus. Instead of talking

about her own experiences of racism, the woman testifies to the more generalized experiences of others. She weeps; her whole body vibrates. Against my mother’s stoicism, the weeping almost reads as performance. It has the texture of a sleeve pulled up to reveal a sore and disgust the viewer. *Put it away.*

But the pitch of the reactions on campuses is not a display of “excessive vulnerability” resulting in “self-diminishment,” as some critics of student tactics claim. Something is pressing on these students, making them burst at the seams, and it’s not imaginary. They are like oracles whose bodies bear the collective weight of what others do not—or will not—see: the lynchings my mother cannot incorporate into her worldview, the black boy the police shot down in the street just yesterday. They feel all of it when, for example, a white person mistakes them for another brown person who looks nothing like them.

It is not unreasonable for college students to desire to be carefully held by the universities that courted them. In fact, universities and colleges imply a promise, in their mottoes of “Light and Truth,” in their ivy-encrusted buildings, in the serenity around their lakes and on their manicured greens, and especially in their invitations for students to engage in the leisure of intellectual work. That’s one place where I think students of color hurt: right where leisurely study becomes labor. As a professor who has spent more than half my life on college campuses, I know this labor

intimately—the labor of having to name racism when it is already nakedly visible; the labor of being perpetually suspect, never afforded the possibility of neutral innocence; the labor of negotiating others’ racially offensive speech; or the very special labor of pretending (because you are tired) that everything is fine. Instead of being protected by the institution that you see your white counterparts inhabiting so casually, you find the institution protected from you. That it is guarded by historical figures such as Woodrow Wilson, a KKK sympathizer whose name is emblazoned on a campus building, is not lost on you. Still, folks want to know, why are you so enraged, what is causing your pain, why do you act so insane?

BLANKET SECURITY

By Thomas Chatterton Williams. *Williams is the author of the memoir Losing My Cool, published by Penguin Press in 2010.*

A few days ago, I went to the grocery store near my apartment, in Paris. The weather was cold, and I was bundled up, a beanie low over my forehead and the large hood of my parka over the beanie. The moment I entered the store, a security guard—almost certainly assuming I was a young Arab—was on me, gruffly demanding that I lower my hood. I was cold and refused. We argued, and the man ended up shadowing me, perhaps out of spite, for the duration of my shopping. It was the kind of ambiguous, unimportant, but frankly unpleasant experience that I can’t help imagining wouldn’t happen if I were white. And it would qualify as what many Americans, particularly on college campuses, have increasingly come to interpret and describe as a form of “microaggression.”

In this instance, my options were limited. I insisted on my right to present myself as I wanted, and finally ignored the man. I left the store irritated but in no way damaged. I am still not positive that what transpired was racism. Were I on an American college campus, however, it would be easier now than ever before to seek refuge in a “safe space.” There, I could recount the affront to others who looked like me and to sympathetic allies, without fear of judgment, contradiction, or even skeptical questioning. This would likely make me feel better in the short term, but it is also entirely plausible that I would emerge from a vague and trivial situation having decided to unequivocally assume the role of the victim.

And that would be a Pyrrhic satisfaction. Such reflexive thinking compounds rather than allevi-

ates whatever residual injuries come with membership in a historically oppressed group. It’s a strange and ironic double diminishment: first to feel oneself aggrieved, and then to conclude that the best response is to bask in fragility and retreat into an artificially indulgent social context. There is something utterly dehumanizing about being fit to a demographic profile, reduced to the sex or color of a body. While I may not be able to control how I look or how others perceive me, I control absolutely the ways I perceive myself. The idea that minorities need bubbles betrays an internalized sense of inferiority. When we concede public space as inherently hostile instead of deliberately claiming it as our own—as Martin Luther King Jr. and so many others did in the Sixties, as the gay-rights movement did more recently—we perpetuate and reinforce some of the very biases we seek to counteract.

Just as troubling, the growing power and influence of the appeal to vulnerability transforms it from a strictly defensive (if ineffective) tool into an increasingly potent method of intimidation that can silence even meaningful disagreement. If the point is for everybody to be treated equally and with dignity, it should cause alarm when we watch a seething crowd shout down a lone professor at Yale, or physically repel a photographer at the University of Missouri. In such situations, the victim has not been redeemed—she has swapped places with her tormentor.

Ultimately, the quest for guaranteed emotional security and a coerced or rigged affirmation in conditions of real or imagined oppression, while understandable, does little to alter the status quo. On the contrary, that quest painfully concedes the point that inequality is permanent. Real safety and freedom—which is to say, full participation in a society in which one has an equal stake, and not merely a symbolic shelter—requires systemic support, but it also needs personal imagination and courage. At the very least, it requires the courage to be uncomfortable and the imagination to see ourselves as strong.

A KIND OF GRACE

By Hannah Black. *Black is an artist and writer from the U.K. She is the author of Dark Pool Party, which was published last month by Dominical Arcadia Missa.*

The antiviolence politics of which the phrase “safe spaces” has become a metonym has inspired many criticisms, most of them condemning



Double Shadow LIV, a collage by John Stezaker, whose work was on view in January at Richard Gray Gallery in Chicago.

the participants' lack of realism or resilience. A world without hierarchy and violence is impossible, say the pragmatists; the psyche itself is violent, say the psychoanalysts. To me, the college students who are attempting to highlight inequity seem more admirable than the people who sneer at them. To suggest otherwise is to shrug off the dismal prevalence of sexual and racial violence, which exists on an eerie continuum from Abu Ghraib to campus hazing. The safe space does not guarantee protection, but it does offer a method for thinking harder about cruelty. The contingent, strategic demand for safety is not a retreat from reality but a closer examination of reality's contours—not in every case, yet often enough that its critics should be more careful.

A few years back, I was called out, or challenged, for using transphobic language. I know from this experience that it hurts to be experienced as hurtful, or at least that it stings the pride to be wrong. But I was wrong, and now I know it. I would have been no less wrong for not knowing I was wrong, no less hurtful if no one told me they felt hurt. Like the writers of ungenerous caricatures of campus politics, I don't enjoy being yelled at, or hearing that I've wounded someone, or being made to feel ignorant. My first

response is also a kind of panicked cringe, or a lashing out: No, you can't mean me! It's you who are wrong! But I did, eventually, thankfully, realize that my suspicion of trans people was based on the worst kind of self-justifying nonsense. There is no reason why my sense of someone else's gender should override their own. I am grateful to the people who yelled at me, told me that I'd hurt them, and made me feel my ignorance, to get me to this now-obvious point. The experience was not intellectually limiting, or an attack by the thought police: to the contrary, my realization about the complicated untruths of gender, and of my own previous bigotry, was one of the most intellectually expansive experiences of my life. It released me into a new, gentler conception of my own body and the bodies of others. It brought new people into my life and gave me a greater, sometimes scary, sense of possibility.

Don't the columnists and op-ed writers ever have the terror and joy of becoming suspicious of their certainties? Because of my race, perhaps, some things came easier: it is not hard for me to understand that whiteness comes with social rewards that are subtended by violence against those outside the magic circle. I mean not only that, as the child of a black

father, I could sense from an early age that the appearance of my body triggered strange reactions in white people. I am also referring to how, as the relatively light-skinned and white-assimilated black child of a white mother, I became aware of the ways I benefited from racial privileges. Although it's not anywhere near as hard as magnetizing and managing other people's racism, it is a strange feeling to carry around the benefits accrued from histories of violence. Often innocently, just by being lighter-skinned or cis or white or male, you remind people of things that they are forced to bear and that you don't have to. But the innocence evaporates, I think, when you can't receive other people's anger with grace, because the anger is a kind of grace: it insists on the importance of experience. Acknowledging this does not seem to me to be intellectually stultifying or quasi-fascist or any of the other labels that are applied to campus organizers. It is only a recognition of the fact, at once banal and extraordinary, that race is a complex constellation of historical phenomena that we all carry around as if it inhered in our bodies.

I think I know why, when given the opportunity, some people will cling to their faith in dubiously self-evident facts ("sex and rape can always be clearly distinguished"), in tautologies ("a woman is

a woman"), in a narrowly shared "common sense." It is hard to perceive yourself as invested with advantages, even as subjectively meager an advantage as a socially favored gender position, let alone to perceive that advantage as politically important. Perhaps because of this, I have met few people as painfully preoccupied with their own vulnerability as straight white men, who often seem to hear analyses of gender domination and white supremacy as if they were only claims about the relative happiness or suffering of individuals. Yes, we know that many white men are very unhappy, we have read the midlife-crisis novels and seen the quarter-life-crisis movies, and conversely we all know about the death-defying inventiveness and joy of people whose culture and communities are under erasure: black, queer, and so on. The politics of safety and violence (i.e., race and gender) concern not only affect but social organization and history above all.

There are intense debates within ultra-left, black-radical, and other circles about the meaning and possibility of safety. Many now use the term "safer space," to indicate that we are talking about relative and not absolute levels of safety. The term "content warning" is now often used in place of "trigger warning," partly because the leading nature of the latter term has been subject to criticism. The safer space is just as capable of self-critique as any other, which is to say: mostly not very, but somewhat. Critics seem not to have noticed this, or how their own safety is premised on the radical lack of safety of others. They are more troubled by the thought police, who don't exist, than by the real police, who kill. They are free to speak, and believe themselves to be so, but they seem surprised to find that others are, too.

[Poem]

IMAGINARY AUGUST

By C. D. Wright (1949–2016), from *ShallCross*, which will be published next month by Copper Canyon Press. Wright was the author of more than a dozen volumes of poetry. She died in January.

If one stood perfectly still. Even in the withering hours
of then. Hair down to here. Being alive and quiet.
One could forget oneself. Forget what one didn't even recognize.
How mad it felt. Subliminally. One could pick out goldfinches
and mourning cloaks among the dying stalks of cosmos,
and across the ditch of gray wastewater they use to irrigate
the burial ground, a young man in a late-flowering tree
taking our photograph.

COMMON CAUSE

By Alix Rule. Rule is a doctoral student in sociology at Columbia University.

What is actually at stake in the recent conflicts at American universities? As on-campus skirmishes escalate into free-floating culture wars, two key points have been missed. First, many of these controversies have pitted students against professors. Second, when seen in that light—as conflicts between students and professors—few have anything to do with free speech. At Yale, for example, Erika Christakis, the

assistant head of a residential college, volunteered her thoughts on a message that discouraged racist Halloween costumes: in her opinion, as a specialist in child psychology, “young people” should dress up as they liked. Students found her email infantilizing and offensive; they communicated those reactions forcefully. The head of the college, Christakis’s spouse, defended her position and her right to share her views. He was soon backed by other faculty. Students intensified their protest, and called for the couple to resign from their mentorship positions.

But Christakis’s freedom of speech wasn’t being threatened—not in the sense that an authority tried to limit it. Neither the state nor her employer sought to censor her, nor even a voting majority. She was taken to task for something she wrote, by undergraduate students.

What, then, did “free speech” mean to the many professors, at Yale and beyond, who went out of their way to side with Christakis in defense of the idea? To judge from the outpouring, they were concerned about preserving the university as a space for genuine debate, where even uncomfortable opinions can be encountered and everyone can learn from their differences. Of course—where there is no risk of formal power being exercised—that knife should cut both ways: it should mean not just that students be open to learning from the disagreeable opinions of their professors but also the other way around.

The question we should be asking is why these fights have been so bitter. Laura Kipnis’s collision with sexual-assault activists at Northwestern was another high-profile example; print versions of the debate have been equally nasty, touched off by features like “I’m a Liberal Professor and My Liberal Students Terrify Me.” The issues occasioning the controversies are not equivalent. Yet in these conflicts and others, both sides see themselves as progressive, desiring a more just campus and society. Both support Black Lives Matter and want their universities to be more inclusive; both include self-characterized feminists. Why have their arguments been framed as contests in which

The sense of vulnerability expressed by today’s undergraduate activists has attracted a lot of attention—first from the left and now from a delighted right. Writing in the *New York Times*, Todd Gitlin, who teaches at Columbia University, went further than most professors to empathize with the protesters at his university (and mine). He hypothesized that students’ feelings of insecurity had a foundation, namely “mountainous debt loads,” the destabilization of work, and careers that “dissolve into serial jobs,” before concluding that students should, effectively, man up.

Well, maybe. Isn’t it simpler to believe that students feel vulnerable for the reasons they claim?

Police who are paid to protect people are instead shooting black citizens, the courts that are supposed to be holding people to account are not punishing them, and the silence of universities about these issues makes what are supposed to be places for truth-telling look pretty hypocritical. The other major context for the visibility of student protest is the wave of federal Title IX investigations into the handling of campus rape, an area that universities have long claimed authority to mediate despite the institutional conflicts of interest involved. Here, attention has revealed that many universities

[Accord]

SIGNED AND DATED

From a relationship contract created by a first-year male undergraduate and signed by him and a girlfriend. The contract is part of ongoing research for Consent Stories, a project by Erica Boas, a lecturer at Santa Clara University, and Jason Laker, a professor at San Jose State University.

I will not cheat.
I will not flirt.
I will not lie or avoid disclosing truths.
I will not manipulate the relationship for profit.
I will refrain from nagging.
I will say “I love you” in a manner more significant than to my friends.
Sexual actions will stay confidential.
We will properly use birth control.
Drunken sex is a no-no.
Erections come randomly. Do not find offensive.
There will be no public comparisons made about private body parts.
No dirty dancing.
No dick threats.
I will not hack computers, social networks, brains, or phones.
Gifts will be without guarantee of compensation.
Share the bed and blanket.
Dessert proportions shall be considered separately before they are shared.
Hairstyling can be suggested but not performed by the other without consent.
Implementing tracking devices on each other or each other’s belongings must be acknowledged.
No tattoos or body art signifying our relationship will be used unless agreed between us.
Respect childhood toys and treat them with care.



COURTESY THE ARTIST AND HOLLIS TAGGART GALLERIES, NEW YORK CITY

Apple Tree, a painting by Alex Kanevsky, whose work was on view in December at Hollis Taggart Galleries, in New York City.

have been worse than negligent in dealing with the students who entrusted themselves to the schools' internal processes.

Students' vulnerability makes them emotional—and of course justified emotion is the basis of any social critique. And maybe the students' impulse to cast their professors as part of an older generation that is complicit with enduring patterns of injustice is likewise understandable. Other cohorts of student protesters have gotten away with it, after all: many of the professors involved in these same disputes, including Gitlin, identify with an earlier generation whose critique of "the system" has gone down in history, and not for its subtlety.

Students then and now have often failed to distinguish their professors from the institutions at which they work. But in casting so much recent student activism as a danger to the intellectual freedom they value, professors are also conflating their students, particularly (tuition-

paying) undergrads, with university administrations and the forces to which they are responsive.

Like students' own, professors' sense of vulnerability is not merely psychological. In the case of adjunct instructors and researchers—who, as everyone has grown tired of reading, do an increasing proportion of academic grunt work—the grounds for that feeling are obvious, urgent, and of the kind Gitlin suggests: debt, precarious jobs, zero ability to plan for the long term. They (we) need unions.

Tenured faculty also have legitimate reasons to feel vulnerable. The response of universities such as my own to the guidelines issued by the federal Office of Civil Rights as it began investigating student Title IX complaints makes for a case in point. The OCR guidelines say that "responsible employees," to be designated by a university, are required to report cases of sexual misconduct. Columbia and other universities

responded by designating virtually all academic employees who have regular contact with undergraduates as mandatory reporters. This means that any conversation with an undergraduate that refers to what might count as sexual “misconduct” must be reported to the university’s administrative staff for Title IX scrutiny, even if doing so is against a student’s wishes.

The effect of this policy, if heeded, would be to shut down frank talk about sex on campus—and to restore the silence in which administrators handled rape allegations before the guidelines. Rules like this make it impossible to take seriously university-sponsored efforts at “community conversation” about “sexual respect”—to quote administrators at my own institution. Such a policy relieves universities of the fraught and lawsuit-laden burden of saying when sex should be punishable, by quietly devolving the risk in these decisions to professors, research scientists, and graduate teaching assistants. (Columbia has since begun to argue before the National Labor Relations Board that T.A.’s are not employees at all, with the aim of demonstrating that they have no right to unionize.)

If students and professors are feeling vulnerable and embattled, one group is secure, and has, perhaps, been made more secure by our squabbles. Americans have been hearing for a long time about how bloated the administrative budgets of universities have become. Yet administrators, and the lawyers and consultants they hire, aren’t sitting idle. They are working hard to protect the brands of the institutions they work for and the security of their endowments. Passing legal exposure from the institution to the individuals who work there is just one way of dealing with the tricky issues that threaten to alienate a university’s stakeholders—be they parents, donors, or future alumni. There’s no reason to imagine that this process has any respect for the university as a space for genuine debate, where one might encounter unpopular opinions. Academics who worry about academic freedom are right to, but in focusing on student protests, their attention has been in the wrong place.

The recent pattern of campus conflict shows us that we are confronting a university in which both students and faculty lack real control over the way their institutions are organized and managed. Observers have pointed out that the ambivalent outcomes of today’s student activism owe much to the fact that universities are increasingly run like corporations. But they write about the “corporate university” as though we know what that is. I’m not so sure that, collectively, we do.

Campus politics badly needs a way of talking about what’s going on inside the university right now, cast in light of the systemic concerns that affect our lives outside it. Figuring out what the

corporate university is, making that understanding public, and calling for something better is a solid project for campus activism. It’s a basis on which different generations of activists—generations that are different demographically, in addition to being different in political style and idiom—can start talking to one another. A critique of the corporate university would shift the debate from whether academic work needs the protection of unions to how to make these organizations strong, democratic, and responsive enough to their members that they can function on campus as alternative poles to administrative power—and make sure universities remain the bulwarks of free expression that they claim to be.

It also might be a way to win. After ignoring calls to address hate speech against students of color for months, the president and the chancellor of the University of Missouri resigned when the football team threatened a strike that would have cost \$1 million within a week. Clearly, the athletes understood what the corporate university was.

In the meantime, university administrations and their allies have been opportunistic in playing up whatever side of these conflicts suits them, assimilating outrage at campus sexual assault and claims to free speech with equal haste. The worthy ideals that have mobilized students and professors come to mean less and less. In the month following the resignations at Missouri, a Republican legislator in the university’s home state introduced a bill that would revoke the scholarship of any student athlete who “calls, incites, supports or participates in any strike.” Students and professors will not always agree. But both groups would benefit if they were more careful in describing their targets, and perhaps more imaginative about where they find their friends.

POLITICAL CORRECTION

By Osita Nwanevu. Nwanevu is a recent graduate of the University of Chicago and the editor of the South Side Weekly.

Last fall, not long after students at Yale began demanding the resignation of faculty members Erika and Nicholas Christakis over an email Erika had written, a video began making the rounds of conservative media. It showed a Yale student telling Nicholas that he was “disgusting” and “should not sleep at night.” A week later, Yale’s William F. Buckley Jr. Program—an organization for conservative

students—held its fifth annual conference and gala, whose theme was “The Future of Free Speech: Threats in Higher Education and Beyond.” During a conference panel called “The State of Free Expression and Intellectual Diversity in Higher Education,” Greg Lukianoff, the head of a free-speech-advocacy group, joked that students had responded to Erika Christakis’s email as though “she had actually wiped out an Indian village.” As soon as the words were out of his mouth, a student activist named Edward Columbia began shouting. He kept it up until he was physically removed from the building and put into a police car. Within two hours, protesters had assembled outside the panel with signs reading GENOCIDE IS NOT A JOKE. The whole episode seemed to confirm everything the Buckley Program was saying about liberal intolerance.

For decades, writers on the right have kept a careful record of the Orwellianism of liberal university faculty and the intolerance of left-wing and minority students. The latest wave of political correctness—marked, it is said, by its interest in identity politics and “safe spaces” where students can avoid exposure to unpleasant ideas—represents for many in the conservative press the logical progression of liberals’ fifty-year hegemony

over campus culture. The push to censor dissenting views, along with the creation of actual physical spaces that would insulate students from all that could threaten their dearly held beliefs, is, on this view, merely a natural extension of decades of unchallenged leftist indoctrination.

It would not surprise these writers to learn that one particularly pompous and intolerant Yale undergraduate wrote a book with the subtitle *The Superstitions of “Academic Freedom.”* “I believe it to be an indisputable fact,” writes the author, who was twenty-five years old and a year and a half out of Yale at the time of publication, “that most colleges and universities, and certainly Yale, the protests and pretensions of their educators and theorists notwithstanding, do not practice, cannot practice, and cannot even believe what they say about education and academic freedom.” What might surprise today’s conservative media is that this book, published in 1951, was *God and Man at Yale*, which

launched the career of its author, William F. Buckley Jr.

Buckley’s case against academic freedom is simple. Bias and intellectual prejudice, he argues, are largely inextricable from universities. Value judgments that exclude the work of some scholars while promoting the work of others are made constantly. “Would Yale hire, or, if hired, would Yale retain, a man who openly scorned democracy as a weary, unintelligent, untenable, pernicious political system?” Buckley asks. “And yet there have been scores of distinguished scholars, dating back to the time Alcibiades said of democracy, ‘Why discuss such acknowledged madness?’, who have regarded the principles of our form of government with unleavened contempt.”

It is, of course, quite imaginable that the Yale of today would hire a political-science professor who was deeply critical of democracy. But it is also clear why such a decision would have seemed unlikely in the era of European totalitarianism. That things have changed between then and now is precisely Buckley’s point: the freedom of scholars and the openness of universities are functionally constrained by the mores and concerns of their time, though universities often pretend otherwise.

Academic institutions are also constrained by the other commitments they claim to make. Buckley quotes Yale’s president, Charles Seymour: “A major obligation [of the educator] is to train our youth in the understanding and practice of American democracy whether in the classroom or in our campus life.” Pronouncements of this kind, which are still made by those who lead universities today, necessarily lend authoritative weight to certain ideas—in this case, that the American system of democracy is worth practicing—at the expense of others. This wasn’t a problem for Buckley, whose chief concern was that the Yale of his day had done

[Poem]

A CHILD TO THE STATE

By Jacqueline Waters, from *Commodore*, which will be published next year by Ugly Duckling Presse. Waters is the author of two previous volumes of poetry, including, most recently, *One Sleeps the Other Doesn’t* (2011).

The way to do history
Is not to care about it
Whatever you care for you diminish
Facts remain the same, changing with the day
While what is true of one repeats
By turning true of another
Everywhere the sound of crying
Neither immediate nor interesting
Unlike you, with those low goals
You’re not just going to overflow toward
You’ve got to list the ambitious pains
Persevere through the doubt you watch
Take inventive forms like clouds
Owing the world a form

too little to indoctrinate its students with the values that had been espoused by its administrators and founders. Those values—as determined by the university's alumni, trustees, and administrators—were derived from Christianity and a belief in the superiority of free-market capitalism. Or at least they should have been, according to Buckley; he spends many pages detailing the extent to which leftist thought and atheism had infiltrated the university. His remedies to this infiltration were simple: unduly liberal textbooks were to be removed and left-wing professors were to be reprimanded or fired, with the aim of making Yale uniformly conservative.

If total conversion was not possible, Buckley argued, administrators should at least have taken pains to protect the sensibilities of Yale's Christian and conservative students from professors like the popular but eccentric world historian Ralph E. Turner, a “professional debunker” who was known for his mockery of religion.

Many Yale students laugh off the influence of Mr. Turner and ultimately classify him as a gifted and colorful fanatic. Others, more impressionable, and hence those over whom there is cause to be concerned, are deeply disturbed by Mr. Turner's bigoted atheism and finish the year they spend with him full of suspicions and doubts about religion that they may retain for a lifetime.

Buckley clearly envisioned turning *all of Yale* into a safe space, one that would protect students emotionally and intellectually from the influence of unfamiliar and “disturbing” ideas. He opposed not the indoctrination of students but the wrong kind of indoctrination, and argued that Yale professors should allow radical ideas into the classroom only to prove “the shortcomings and fallacies of such value judgments.” Buckley's ideal professor was a confirmer and inculcator of existing biases, not an impartial mediator of reasoned debates and discussions.

Buckley's book offers a prescient view of what may well be the endgame of the current safe-space controversies—and, given the listlessness of the American university today, that outcome could be positive. If colleges such as Yale acquiesce to demands made on the basis of leftist identity politics, they will take on, as part of their missions, the elimination of white supremacy, sexism, ableism, homophobia, transphobia, rape culture, and assorted other biases and prejudices from their campuses. If this shift happens, it could be seen not as the forced adoption of new ideological commitments, but as the forced fulfillment of an old aspiration. For decades, the American university has been committed to a liberal near truth—the equality of all people—that not only undermines academic freedom as conceived by Buckley but also, to today's activists, outweighs the closely related liberal ideals

that are being fought over in the wake of the new political correctness: freedom of speech and open discourse. In a sense, liberalism, as such, is at war with itself over itself. By expanding access to minorities, expelling bigots, committing to the study of fields that are relevant to the marginalized, and, during the first wave of political correctness, two decades ago, choosing to undermine free speech to better protect minorities through the enactment of speech codes, the American university has definitively chosen its side.

It is highly unlikely that the majority of institutions will meet all the demands of the identity-politics left. But concessions are being made here and there, and some institutions will eventually come to be seen as more hospitable to the ideologies of political correctness than others. This development, in turn, will open safe spaces to the judgment of what Buckley would have deemed a true marketplace of ideas. Students who embrace left identity politics will be able to self-sort into friendly institutions, while students who are hostile to or ambivalent about those values will avoid them.

There is no reason that this result need be dismaying: students have elected to pursue educations framed by particular viewpoints for ages, by attending religious universities. What's more, students have long been encouraged to choose colleges on the basis of career prospects, athletics, amenities, and the colors of the foliage on admissions brochures; the advent of institutions that can claim to offer an education that accords with deeply held beliefs should be seen as a positive development. If such an education is inferior to the idealized liberal-arts education, it is at least more respectable than those that are offered by universities uninterested in helping students to engage seriously with ideas. Better a safe space than a black hole.

WE OUT HERE

By Wesley Yang. Yang has written for New York magazine, the New York Times, and n+1. He is at work on his first book.

A few years back, I wrote an article about Aaron Swartz, a hacker and activist who killed himself while under indictment for the unauthorized downloading of millions of academic-journal articles from an online archive. Swartz was devoted to an ethic of candid introspection, which he had practiced even at the age of seventeen, on a blog he kept as a freshman at Stanford University, in 2004. In September of that year, Swartz published a short post confessing to something that few take the time

to consider. “However much I hate prejudice at a conscious level, I am nonetheless extremely prejudiced,” he wrote:

At my CS class, my eyes just passed over the large number of foreign and Asian students to land on mostly white ones (black ones too, occasionally). My Asian neighbor tried to make conversation with me and even though he had no accent, because of his face I imagined that he did. Had he been white, there is no question I would have started talking to him about stuff, but instead I brushed him off. I begin to wonder how many people I’ve skipped over.

There’s no term that quite captures what Swartz is describing here. He is admitting to an assumption that results in no act of visible hostility or hatred. He simply declines to extend to the Asian man who is seated next to him in class the same degree of friendliness and regard that he would extend to a white man. Perhaps Swartz’s classmate asked himself later that day whether Swartz was merely a rude jerk, or whether there was a specifically racial component to what had happened. Maybe he didn’t pause to wonder if the latter was the cause; maybe, as an Asian person living in the most Asian region of America, in a classroom full of others of his kind, at a school where Asians were strongly represented, he had no reason to think

that anyone would treat him unkindly because of his race.

Or maybe the nameless Asian man came away from that incident inwardly torn, uncertain whether he had encountered subtle racism, his own social ineptitude, or the intrinsic hardness of the world. Maybe he suspected that all these things were factors—knowing all the while that to make an issue of it would seem an excessive response to an easily deniable claim about an event of small importance with many possible explanations.

If Swartz had thought more deeply about the reflexive aversion he felt toward the Asian man sitting next to him, he might have said something like this: “This person is likely to be a bore. This person is likely to be a grind. This person is likely to be lacking in emotional resonance, presence, humor, individuality, spontaneity, energy, imagination, and warmth. This person is likely to be passive, obedient, submissive, a hardworking nonentity, a nobody, a nullity, one of those mute lugubrious bespectacled glum-faced inscrutable spiky-haired presences haunting the library behind a stack of books, who gaze impassively into a column of figures or drool onto the table while napping in the wee hours.” But it’s doubtful he would have compiled that list. The whole point of living in a culture is that much of the labor of perception and judgment is done for you, spread through media, and absorbed through an imperceptible process that has no single author. Perhaps you, too, can envision being surrounded by Asian faces, all of them merging into one another in their meek self-effacement.

What we know for certain is that had he gotten to know Swartz, who would soon drop out of Stanford to help found the startup Reddit—that is to say, had Swartz not brushed him off because of his race—that nameless Asian man’s life would have been changed for the better.

How do you quantify the effects of things that don’t happen to you? I thought of this question when I glimpsed a picture of protesters at Yale University last fall, many of them black and female, bearing a sign with the following message:

WE OUT HERE
WE’VE BEEN HERE
WE AINT LEAVING
WE ARE LOVED

It was unclear to what extent the tension between insisting that you aren’t leaving (presumably in defiance of someone or something that would prefer otherwise) and declaring that you are loved (presumably in solidarity with others who might doubt that this was true about themselves and others like them) was intentional. But the slogans testified to the sad but unmentioned fact that seemed to be at the core of these campus protests:

[Couplings]

PARTIES FOUL

*From themes of parties that have been held by college students in the United States and the U.K., collected by Laura Bates. Her book *Everyday Sexism* will be published in April by Thomas Dunne Books.*

Tarts and Vicars
Porn Stars and Directors
Pirates and Wenches
Millionaires and Mistresses
Rappers and Slappers
Creepy Guys and Cutie Pies
CEOs and Corporate Hoes
Golf Pros and Tennis Hoes
Lifeguard Bros and Surfer Hoes
Lawyer Bros and Prison Hoes
G.I. Joes and Army Hoes
Colonial Bros and Nava-hos
King Tuts and Egyptian Sluts

that while you can prohibit the use of racial slurs through rules and norms, no administration or law can force someone to befriend you, or to love you, or to see you as a person who matters, or to notice you at all.

I should confess here to the biases that influence my thinking. At the YMCA camp I attended when I was nine—the first (and, as it happens, the last) setting in which I was subjected to daily racial slurs—my father asked the counselors to ensure fair odds in the physical confrontations between me and the tormentors that he made clear were to be expected. It would not have occurred to him to demand that the administration protect me from bullies. Growing up meant forsaking the frightened victim in yourself, which had a way of sliding into disdain for the category of frightened victims in general.

I don't mean to suggest that I endured a tough upbringing or that my father was a hard man. My upbringing in a small New Jersey suburb was soft—especially when compared with the life, for instance, of my mother. The suffering she endured was squarely in the median range of what people born in Korea in the 1930s experienced. It was not unusual for American bombers to destroy your family's house. It was not unusual for your brother or father or sister to be killed by friendly fire. It was routine for proud and ancient families like my mother's to be reduced to a destitute rabble living off the charity of American missionaries. But her struggle did and does make most of the challenges that you are likely to face as the child of Americans in a part of the country where most of the kids assume they are headed to college seem fantastically trivial in comparison.

The theory of microaggression can't help but seem to me mostly an indicator of how radically devoid of other threats our lives in America have become—at least in the fortunate part of the country where people go to college. But maybe I've grown habituated to conditions that today's young people feel entitled to reject. And maybe I escaped the role of frightened victim by finding others to victimize. When I think back to those years when all my attitudes were formed, I think also of the only black girl in the gifted-and-talented programs where I first made friends. Her name was Shakina, and she was different in many respects from the suburban Jewish and Asian male wiseasses who were the norm in those classes (if not in the general population of their own schools). What an odious term, "the gifted," to describe a group whose gifts mainly consisted of being the children of lawyers and dentists and professors and bankers—but let's not deny that there was a certain facility we possessed or that it was a source of pride to be segregated into a place where our need for instruction tailored to our

superior abilities would be honored. It should not surprise anyone that being bullied during our school days made us not lovers of humanity but victimizers of others the moment we had the numbers on our side. And I guess it goes without saying that we abused Shakina mercilessly, and that even if our teachers had done more to forbid us from mocking how she talked, as they sometimes tried to do, to little effect, no one could force us to see her as our equal.

In later years, in those same gifted classes, I encountered omniscient, hyperarticulate black teenagers who seemed on the fast track to world domination. They could code-switch from street vernacular to the smooth diction of the lecture hall, using each idiom to swell the power and persuasiveness of the other. They had forged in the crucible of their souls the resources necessary to survive and triumph in a

[Diagnosis]

NEVER NEVER MAN

From "Severe Growing-Up Phobia," a paper that was coauthored by Laurencia Perales Blum and published in Case Reports in Psychiatry, in 2014. The paper discusses a Mexican boy who suffered from gerascophobia, a fear of aging.

The patient is a fourteen-year-old adolescent whose problem started two and a half years ago because of an excessive fear of growing. He does not eat much because food contains nutrients needed for physical development. Due to the restriction in food intake, he has a weight loss of more than twelve kilograms. He adopted a stooped posture to hide his height and began to distort his voice, using lower volume and higher pitch. He has also been searching the Internet to learn how not to ejaculate. He is greatly concerned with the development of secondary sex characteristics. Every time he notices a physical change that indicates that he is growing, he feels fear and anxiety to the point that he has considered undergoing multiple surgeries. If people tell him that he is taller or older, he becomes extremely upset and cries. The patient argues that the expectations adults face are excessive: getting a partner, being independent, and having more responsibility and financial solvency. Once he ages, he is more likely to get sick and die. He feels that the requirements of adult life are overwhelming. Psychotherapy has been provided.



© THE ARTIST. COURTESY ROBERT MANN GALLERY, NEW YORK CITY

"White Rhino, Namibia, 2015," from the series Land of Nothingness, by Maroesjka Lavigne, whose work is on view at Robert Mann Gallery, in New York City.

world that wasn't inclined to believe in their existence until they had proved it. Everyone wanted to know them. Adversity, and the strength to meet it with forbearance and grace, had made them more interesting and complex than anyone who hadn't been exposed to the same stimulus that adversity ends up becoming for those who aren't destroyed by it.

These people were cool. They were also exceptional. The campus protests remind us that any system that requires exceptional fortitude from certain categories of people is an unjust one. The jargon that tried to name this injustice and serve as a tool in the struggle against it—white privilege, microaggression, safe space, etc.—caught on so fast because it named something that people recognized right away from their own lives. Like any new language that seeks to politicize everyday life, the terms were awkward, heavy-handed, and formulaic, but they gave confidence to people desiring redress for the subtle incursions on their dignity that they suspected were holding them back. The new vocabulary provided confirmation of what young people have always had reason to suspect—that the world was conspiring to strip them of their dignity and keep them

in their place—and elevated those grievances to the status of a larger political project. Of course, the terms could easily become totalizing and portray the world as an "iron cage" in which crude identity categories determine everyone's fate in a way that is demonstrably false. In practice, the protesters wound up appealing to college bureaucrats to wipe away the accretions of the world's violent history.

And yet they also gave voice to an aspiration that people of my generation and older, who had grown up more isolated in a whiter America, had not thought could be expressed as a collective demand rather than as an individual wish: that all of us, even the unexceptional, could claim as a matter of right an equal share of existential comfort as those who had never had cause to think of themselves as the other. This still seems to me an impossible wish, and, like all impossible wishes, one that is charged with authoritarian potential. But those of us who have grown inured to life's quotidian brutalities—the ones we accept for ourselves and the ones we unthinkingly impose on others—should not be surprised that the young have a different sense of the possible than we do, or forget too readily what it was like before we were so inured. ■

THE HIDDEN RIVERS OF BROOKLYN

By Elizabeth Royte

From behind a parapet on the tower of Litchfield Villa, the Italianate mansion that marks the western edge of Brooklyn's Prospect Park, I was barely able to make out—over treetops and tall buildings—a glint of Gowanus Bay, roughly two miles away. Edwin Litchfield, the railroad and real-estate tycoon who built this house in 1857, would have had no trouble seeing the bay and much of his landholdings out of a second-floor window, from the hilly and largely treeless farmland outside his front door all the way down to the grassy banks of Gowanus Creek, which by the late 1860s had been dredged and straightened, at his behest, into a shipping canal.

Situated at the bottom of a topographic bowl, the Gowanus marshlands were once nourished by more than a dozen sparkling streams. Most of these rills and freshets haven't been seen for 150 years; following modern convention, engineers either buried them or corralled them into pipes as they extended the city's streets. But one of these waterways, I learned after climbing down from Litchfield's roof and placing my ear atop a manhole cover, still seemed to be flowing, right under my feet.

"This was the middle branch of what becomes Vechte's Brook," said Eymund Diegel, an urban planner, Gowanus gadfly, and self-described pipe geek, as we crossed Prospect Park West at 2nd Street, not far from Litchfield Villa. In his hand was a copy of the 1782 British Headquarters map, over which he had superimposed a 1767 map by the British cartographer Bernard Ratzer, a map of the modern street grid, and his own approximation of the area's historical streams and springs.

Diegel and I headed downhill, following the blue lines on his map and noting slumping pavement and sudden changes in lot size—all of which suggested clues, if you were in a certain frame of mind, to colonial-era streams that are still asserting themselves today.

The people who live at the lower elevations of this 1,700-acre watershed aren't always charmed by its hydrologic history. During large rainstorms, those streams contribute to basement flooding, they cause

Elizabeth Royte's most recent book is Bottlemania: Big Business, Local Springs, and the Battle over America's Drinking Water (Bloomsbury).

WITH THE TURN OF A BRASS
WHEEL, WE DROPPED BELOW
STREET LEVEL. THE BASEMENT
WAS CAVERNOUS, MUSTY, AND
RIVEN BY A FLOWING STREAM

manhole covers to shoot up into the air, and they force a brown froth of sewage up out of tubs, sinks, and toilets. Down at the canal, conditions are even worse.

Like more than 700 other U.S. cities, New York has a “combined” sewage system, which means that rain from the streets joins sewage in underground drainpipes. When the system was designed, more than a century ago, those pipes discharged into local waterways. These days, the flow is pumped to wastewater-treatment plants for filtering and disinfection. But in some areas, as little as a quarter-inch of rain can drown the system. Pipes fill up, plants reach capacity, and untreated sewage, along with storm water, gushes into our rivers and bays.

The Gowanus may be a tiny, filthy place, but its problems with water—too much in the wrong place at the wrong time—are nearly universal. The world over, deluges blow out pipes and culverts, overwhelm treatment plants, contaminate drinking-water supplies, and flood low-lying areas. As cities grow and pave, and as the climate warms—unleashing stronger storms—the drainage crisis will only worsen. But while New York bureaucrats inch through both established and innovative frameworks for taming urban floods, Diegel has come up with his own scheme for using the forces of nature to unpervert the hydrology of the Gowanus and to reanimate a canal long written off as dead.

Wandering along the presumed course of Vechte’s Brook, Diegel repeatedly dropped to the ground to listen at manhole covers and drains. He blurted out contextual clues: that anomalously large tree hinted at a steady water source; a discharge pipe protruding from a school basement spoke to regular flooding. “That’s as good as a chalk outline on a sidewalk,” Diegel said.

When I suggested alternative explanations for these phenomena, Diegel quoted James Joyce: “His errors are volitional and are the portals of discovery.” Diegel bases his streambed predictions on historical maps and paintings, modern flood reports, and computer modeling. He plans to refine his hypotheses by sending remote-controlled cameras underground, injecting dye into known seeps to establish whither they wend, and sampling upwellings for fluoride, which would indicate a leaking city pipe rather than a natural flow.

Diegel told me he was 80 percent confident about the blue lines he had marked on what he called his ghost map. “The massive amount of landfilling and hill cutting makes it difficult to give an exact center to streambeds, plus there were natural meander patterns and fluctuations,” he said. Of the springs he had pinpointed on the neighborhood’s lower slopes, he was closer to 100 percent confident. Soon I would see why.

Several blocks north of Vechte’s Brook, and a stone’s throw from the canal, Diegel and I slipped down a dank and narrow alleyway—think *Oliver!*—then climbed into the freight elevator of a nineteenth-century factory building. With the turn of a brass wheel, we dropped nine feet below street level and entered another world. The basement was cavernous, musty, and—I was astonished to see—riven by a flowing stream.

“This is Brouwer’s Brook,” Diegel said. He dipped his finger into the current and licked it. “It’s fresh springwater.” According to his 1767 map, the Brouwer spring emerged behind a farmhouse in a nearby meadow. In the 1650s, the brook fed a pond that powered one of the first flour mills in the region. (During the Battle of Long Island, at the start of the Revolutionary War, the colonists burned down the mill to prevent it from falling into British hands; it was later rebuilt.) Today, Brouwer’s Brook rushes across the floor through eight-inch-wide channels hacked into the concrete, before flowing into a pump that shunts the water into city pipes, 24/7, and thence to the Red Hook wastewater-treatment plant.

The stream affirmed Diegel's cartographic skills; it also illustrated why his work matters. Remove Brouwer's Brook from city pipes and reconnect it to the Gowanus, and you could reduce sewer overflows and basement backups, lower the canal's concentration of pathogens, and lighten the workload at the Red Hook plant. The idea has enormous practical appeal. Why pump and filter water that is already clean when gravity would, with a little help, return the brook to its historical outlet?

Back in the Vechte's drainage, Diegel showed curious passersby, with the help of his map, where the blue ponds and streams of the green Gowanus once lay. Remarkably, not a single person we encountered on a five-hour walk *didn't* know what a combined-sewer overflow was. Some even knew about the two-pronged approach that the city's Department of Environmental Protection had taken to fixing the watershed's problems: "gray" infrastructure, which includes storage tanks, pumps, and pipes, and "green" infrastructure, which is low-tech, mimics natural systems, consumes far less energy than gray infrastructure, and costs less per gallon to build and maintain.

New York City's commitment to green infrastructure in the Gowanus is most visible in the ninety or so enlarged tree pits, called bioswales, that collect rain and runoff. Plants in the bioswales sequester or break down the pollutants typically found in storm water—oil and grease, heavy metals, pathogens from dog droppings—and return water to the air through evapotranspiration. Whatever the plants can't absorb is filtered through eight feet of soil and gravel back into the earth.

"If you take green infrastructure to scale, you'll achieve a critical mass of storm-water capture," said Adrian Benepe, the former commissioner of the New York City parks department and a current vice president of the Trust for Public Land. According to the D.E.P., even a 5 percent reduction in the volume of water processed at wastewater-treatment plants would cut the city's carbon emissions by 15,661 metric tons—the equivalent of taking 3,297 cars off the road. "Distributing thousands of water-absorbing structures around the city, rather than building a few centralized tanks, is just as effective, far cheaper, and more resilient to climate change," said Tom Ballestero, a civil engineer who directs the University of New Hampshire's Stormwater Center.

Over the next several years, the D.E.P. plans to create some 5,000 bioswales throughout the city. It also plans to install permeable paving, which allows rain to seep into the earth; replace concrete traffic islands with landscaped planters; and retrofit public parks and schoolyards with porous

THE CITY EXPECTS ITS GREEN-INFRASTRUCTURE INITIATIVE TO REDUCE COMBINED-SEWER OVERFLOWS BY ROUGHLY 3.8 BILLION GALLONS A YEAR



THOUGH THE VISION OF A STREAM
WINDING THROUGH THIS RAPIDLY
GENTRIFYING NEIGHBORHOOD MAY
SEEM QUIXOTIC, MORE AUDACIOUS
PROJECTS HAVE COME TO PASS

pavers, synthetic turf, and rain gardens, which are similar to bioswales. All together, the city expects its green-infrastructure initiative to reduce combined-sewer overflows by roughly 3.8 billion gallons a year.

Other cities have taken similar steps. Los Angeles is managing its periodic deluges with permeable pavement and rain gardens that allow water to seep into the city's depleted aquifer, instead of sluicing it out to sea. The city is also replacing eleven miles of concrete in the L.A. River with green terraces and wetlands. Flood-plagued communities along the Missouri and Mississippi Rivers are restoring natural floodplains rather than hardscaping them with levees. Philadelphia is planting enough bioswales, grassy roofs, and wetlands, at a cost of \$800 million over twenty-five years, to make permeable a total of fifteen square miles.

Late in the afternoon, Diegel and I squeezed through a narrow gap in a chain-link fence along Third Avenue, sidestepped across the ledge of a bridge over the canal's Fourth Street turning basin, and scrambled down an embankment to the dank space beneath the roadway. "This is the historical outflow of Vechte's Brook," Diegel said with great solemnity. "This is the last leg of the stream's marathon, from near Litchfield Villa in Prospect Park through the whole obstacle course of French drains, basement pumps, and the historic landfill."

I squelched through boot-sucking muck, releasing a whiff of rotten eggs with every step, and took a closer look at the rust-colored flow burbling between



concrete slabs. It was impressive not so much for its appearance as its provenance. Many is the time that I've watched ankle-deep water race down my block, just uphill from here, and wondered where the rain used to go before this bowl was paved. Now I know: the water flowed into a natural channel that slalomed between hills, growing steadily until it married the Gowanus at roughly this point.

The volume of Vechte's is low today (it flows year-round), but it could quadruple if a half-century's worth of rubble, invasive scrub brush, and household trash were excavated from the upland lot. Two hundred years ago, this spot lay near the center of a twenty-four-acre lake that bristled with bivalves and was ringed with salt meadows.

Known as Denton's Mill Pond, it was the defining feature of the Gowanus basin, rising and falling tidally between what would become Second and Fourth Avenues.

The Environmental Protection Agency named the Gowanus Canal a Superfund site in 2010. As part of its cleanup plan, the agency committed to excavating twenty-five feet of these corrupted uplands. But Diegel dreams of exposing Vechte's Brook nearly to Fourth Avenue. "This is where the water wants to go," Diegel said, speaking of the thwarted flows that inundate basements and force their way up drains. "Daylighting" streams—removing them from pipes, restoring their riffles and curves, and replanting their banks—raises property values, mitigates local flooding,

filters storm water, cools and cleans the air, and provides havens for plants and animals.

Diegel's vision of a stream winding through this rapidly gentrifying neighborhood may seem quixotic, but projects far more audacious—the High Line comes to mind—have come to pass. “It’s imperative for government to be less dogmatic, to be more entrepreneurial and experimental when it comes to managing storm water,” Adrian Benepe told me. “Government should listen to landscape architects, to scientists, entrepreneurs, and hydrologists who understand how water moves through the soil.”

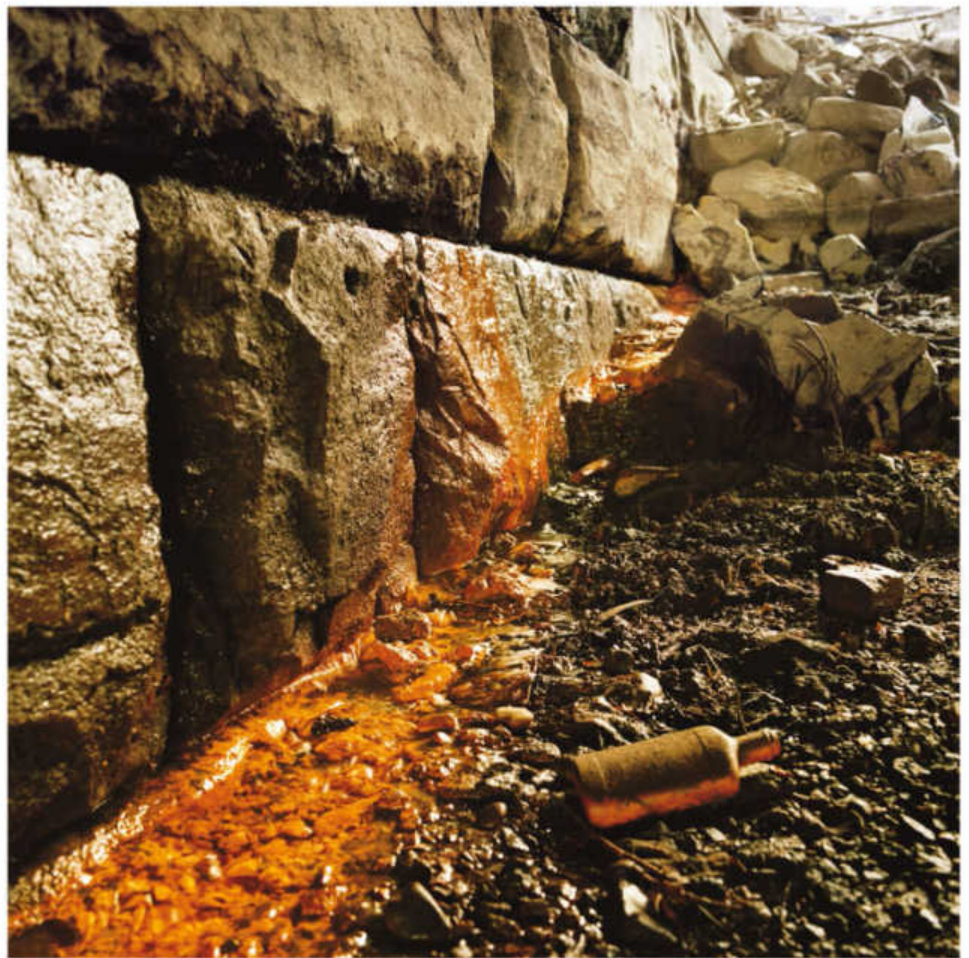
Landlords with buildings atop the former Denton’s Mill Pond don’t need Diegel or colonial maps to remind them of the area’s soggy history. After the contractors who were excavating the Whole Foods building site at the corner of Third Avenue and 3rd Street hit water five feet down, the company abandoned its plan to build most of the store below grade. Across from the grocery store, at the bottom of a basement stairwell in the Old American Can Factory—an enormous circa 1885 building—Denton’s Mill Pond rises and falls in accordance with rain and the tides. Martin Bisi, a record producer and longtime Can Factory tenant, said that after Hurricane Irene dumped seven inches of rain on the city, “I watched as the water rose six feet in the stairwell, to within inches of my studio door.” During heavy rains, Bisi often hears a spooky rush of water—a branch of Vechte’s, he believes—flowing beneath his feet.

Forty years ago, the Gowanus was a far wilder place. “It was obvious that these were former wetlands,” Bisi recalled. “You could see where nature and human activity rubbed up against each other. But now that there’s this illusion of order here, and it seems humans have it all under wraps, the thought that nature is still timelessly coexisting right under our human plane of city streets is really alluring.”

Diegel folded his ghost map one last time and then extracted from his satchel a copy of a map drawn in 1865 by Egbert Ludovicus Viele, a hydrologist who served as engineer in chief of Central Park and submitted the original plans for Prospect Park. The document shows the streams and marshes of New York City atop its street grid. Many years after completing his map, which is still used today, Viele accused city engineers of making a fatal mistake: they had neglected to provide “a system of drains to carry off this living water that is constantly bubbling out of the rocks on which the city is built, and which will find an outlet somehow.”

Viele didn’t include the Gowanus in his map, but surely he’d understand Diegel’s yearning to free, or at least acknowledge, the watershed’s aboriginal springs and creeks—the hidden arteries that, if you know where to look, still pulse with life today. ■

“THE THOUGHT THAT NATURE IS STILL TIMELESSLY COEXISTING RIGHT UNDER OUR HUMAN PLANE OF CITY STREETS IS ALLURING,” MARTIN BISI SAID



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SAVE OUR PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES

In defense of America's best idea

By Marilynne Robinson



Ralph Waldo Emerson's lecture "The American Scholar," which he delivered in 1837, implicitly raises radical questions about the nature of education, culture, and consciousness, and about their interactions. He urges his hearers to make the New World as new as it ought to be, urges his audience to outlive the constraints that colonial experi-

ence imposed on them and to create the culture that would arise from the full and honest use of their own intellects, minds, and senses. Any speaker might say the same to any audience. Every generation is in effect colonized by its assumptions, and also by the things it reveres. The future, in American experience, has always implied inevitable departure from the

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familiar, together with the possibility of shaping inevitable change. The historical circumstances of the country at the time Emerson spoke made vivid what is always true: that there is a frontier, temporal rather than geographical, which can and surely will be the new theater of old crimes and errors, but can and will also be an enlargement of experience, a region of indeterminacy, of possibility.

In his introduction to *Democracy in America*, Alexis de Tocqueville says a striking thing about the world that was then unfolding:

From the moment when the exercise of intelligence had become a source of strength and wealth, each step in the development of science, each new area of knowledge, each fresh idea had to be viewed as a seed of power placed within

or effect of education as “the natural grandeur of man” is mentioned as a basis of our culture or politics.

Emerson was speaking at a moment when colleges were being founded all across America—my own university, Iowa, in 1847. At that time the great Frederick Law Olmsted was putting his aesthetic blessing on our public spaces, and notably on college campuses. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines “campus” as an Americanism. The conventions established in the early nineteenth century have persisted in the meadows and gardens and ponds that celebrate, if only out of habit, these cities of the young, these local capitals of learning and promise. Olmsted, like Emerson, would have seen something like the emergence of brilliant individuality in unexpected places that

Tocqueville describes. This individuality was strongly potential in American life, though as yet suppressed, according to Emerson, by a preoccupation with the practical, with trade and enterprise, and suppressed as well by a colonial deference to the culture of Europe. Like Tocqueville, Emerson is proposing an anthropology, proposing that there is a splendor inherent in human beings that is thwarted and hidden by a deprivation of the means to express it, even to realize it in oneself. The celebration of learning that was made visible in its spread into the territories and the new states must have taken some part of its character from the revelation of the human gifts that education brought with it. It is interesting to see what persists over time, and interesting to see what is lost.

For those to whom Emerson is speaking, who have made a good account of themselves as students at Harvard, deprivation is the effect of an unconscious surrender, a failure to aspire, to find in oneself the grandeur that could make the world new. We know these people. In fact we are these people, proudly sufficient to expectations, our own and others', and not much inclined to wonder whether these expectations are not rather low. We have, of course, accustomed ourselves to a new anthropology, which is far too sure to accommodate anything like grandeur, and which barely acknowledges wit, in the nineteenth-century or the modern sense. Eloquence might be obfuscation, since the main project of the self is now taken by many specialists in the field to be the concealment of selfish motives. How do we define imagination these days, and do we still associate it with fires? Unless it is escape or delusion, it seems

people's grasp. Poetry, eloquence, memory, the beauty of wit, the fires of imagination, the depth of thought, all these gifts which heaven shares out by chance turned to the advantage of democracy and, even when they belonged to the enemies of democracy, they still promoted its cause by highlighting the natural grandeur of man. Its victories spread, therefore, alongside those of civilization and education.

Tocqueville, like Emerson, stood at a cusp of history where literacy and democracy were assuming an unprecedented importance in the civilization of the West. Though not unambivalent in his feelings about democracy, Tocqueville did see it as based on “the natural grandeur of man,” and brought to light by education. Poetry, eloquence, memory, wit, the fires of imagination, the depth of thought: these are mentioned as rarely now as the object



to have little relevance, for good or ill, to the needs of the organism. So, like character, like the self, imagination has no doubt by now been defined out of existence. We leave it to a cadre of specialists to describe human nature—a phrase that by their account no doubt names yet another nonexistent thing. At best, these specialists would show no fondness for human nature if they did concede its existence, nor do they allow to it any of the traits that it long found ingratiating in itself. This is so true that the elimination of the pleasing, the poignant, the tragic from our self-conception—I will not mention brilliance or grandeur—would seem to be the object of the exercise. Plume-plucked humankind. Tocqueville and Emerson might be surprised to find us in such a state, after generations of great freedom, by the standards of history, and

oric were once honorable things.) An important aspect of human circumstance is that we can create effective reality merely by consenting to the phantasms of the moment or of the decade. While the Citizen can entertain aspirations for the society as a whole and take pride in its achievements, the Taxpayer, as presently imagined, simply does not want to pay taxes. The societal consequences of this aversion—failing infrastructure, for example—are to be preferred to any inroad on his or her monetary fiefdom, however large or small. Like limits on so-called Second Amendment rights, this is a touchy point. Both sensitivities, which are treated as though they were protections against centralization and collectivism, are having profound consequences for our society as a whole, and this without meaningful public debate, without referendum.

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after the vast elaboration of resources for learning in every field.

Indeed, it is this vast elaboration, epitomized in the American university, that proves we once had a loftier view of ourselves, and it is a demonstration of the change in our self-conception that our universities no longer make sense to legislatures and to “people of influence”—a phrase that, in our moment, really does mean moneyed interests. Traditional centers of influence—churches, unions, relevant professionals—have lost their place in public life, or, speaking here of those churches that do maintain a public presence, they have merged their influence with the moneyed interests. From the perspective of many today, the great public universities (and many of them are very great) are like beached vessels of unknown origin and intention, decked out preposterously with relics and treasures that are ripe for looting, insofar as they would find a market, or condemned to neglect and decay, insofar as their cash value is not obvious to the most stringent calculation.

There has been a fundamental shift in American consciousness. The Citizen has become the Taxpayer. In consequence of this shift, public assets have become public burdens. These personae, Citizen and Taxpayer, are both the creations of political rhetoric. (It now requires an unusual degree of historical awareness to know that both politics and rhet-

Citizenship, which once implied obligation, is now deflated. It is treated as a limited good that ought to be limited further. Of course, the degree to which the Citizen and the Taxpayer ever existed, exist now, or can be set apart as distinct types is a question complicated by the fact that they are imposed on public consciousness by interest groups, by politicians playing to constituencies, and by journalism that repeats and reinforces unreflectingly whatever gimmicky notion is in the air. It can be said, however, that whenever the Taxpayer is invoked as the protagonist in the public drama, a stalwart defender of his own, and a past and potential martyr to a culture of dependency and governmental overreach, we need not look for generosity, imagination, wit, poetry, or eloquence. We certainly need not look for the humanism Tocqueville saw as the moving force behind democracy.

I will put aside a fact that should be too obvious to need stating: that America has done well economically, despite passing through difficult periods from time to time, as countries will. It would be very hard indeed to make the case that the Land Grant College Act, the 1862 federal law that gave us many of our eminent public universities, has done us any economic harm, or that the centrality of the liberal arts in our education in general has impeded the country's development of wealth. True, a meteor strike or some equivalent could put an end to everything tomorrow. But if we were obliged to rebuild ourselves we could not find a better model for the

creation of wealth than our own history. I do not mean to suggest that wealth is our defining achievement, or that it is the first thing we should protect. But since money is the measure of all things these days it is worth pointing out that there are no grounds for regarding our educational culture as in need of rationalization—it must be clear that I take exception to this use of the word—to align it with current economic doctrine.

All this sidesteps the old Kantian distinction—whether people are to be dealt with as means or as ends. The argument against our way of educating is that it does not produce workers who are equipped to compete in the globalized economy of the future. This has to be

sources (however modest) are at least as desirous of the wonderful as of the profitable or necessary.

Atavism is a potent force in human history. The pull of the retrograde, an almost physical recoil, is much more potent than mere backsliding, and much more consequential than partial progress or flawed reform. The collective mind can find itself reinhabited by old ideas unwillingly, almost unconsciously. A word around which retrograde thinking often constellates is “elitist.” Liberal education was for a very long time reserved to an elite—whence the word “liberal,” befitting free men—who were a small minority in Western societies. Gradually, except by the standards of the world at large, Americans began democratizing privilege. As Tocqueville remarks, heaven shares out by

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as blunt a statement as could be made about the urgency, currently felt in some quarters and credulously received and echoed everywhere, that we should put our young to use to promote competitive adequacy at a national level, to whose profit or benefit we are never told. There is no suggestion that the gifts young Americans might bring to the world as individuals stimulated by broad access to knowledge might have a place or value in this future, only that we should provide in place of education what would better be called training.

If all educational institutions feel this pressure to some degree, public institutions feel it most continuously and profoundly. A university like mine, founded almost 170 years ago, before Iowa even had much in the way of cornfields, gives unambiguous evidence of the kinds of hopes that lay behind its establishment and sustained it through many generations. From an early point the University of Iowa emphasized the arts. It was founded while Emerson was active, and at about the time Tocqueville was published, and can fairly be assumed to have shared their worldview. The same is true of many public universities in America. Accepting creative work toward a graduate degree—the M.F.A. as we know it now—was an Iowa innovation. My own program, the Writers’ Workshop, is the oldest thing of its kind on the planet. People do ask me from time to time why Iowa is in Iowa. For the same reason Bloomington is in Indiana, no doubt. If we were better pragmatists, we would look at the fact that people given a relatively blank slate, the prairie, and a pool of public re-

chance those high gifts of intellect and culture that had previously been associated arbitrarily with status and advantage, which are now manifest as a vastly more generous endowment. We need only allow the spread of learning to see the potential for brilliance in humankind.

But the memory persists that the arts were once social attainments and that the humanities suited one to positions of authority. What use could this education be to ordinary people? What claim should something of such doubtful utility have on the public purse? Or, to look at the matter from another side, why should an English class at the University of Wisconsin be as excellent as an English class at Stanford University, for a mere fraction of the cost? The talk about “top-tier universities,” about supposed rankings, that we hear so often now creates an economics of scarcity in the midst of an astonishing abundance. And it helps to justify assaults on great public resources, of the kind we have seen recently in Wisconsin, under Scott Walker, and elsewhere. Public universities are stigmatized as elitist because they continue in the work of democratizing privilege, of opening the best thought and the highest art to anyone who wants access to them. They are attacked as elitist because their tuition goes up as the support they receive from the government goes down. The Citizen had a country, a community, children and grandchildren, even—a word we no longer hear—posterity. The Taxpayer has a 401(k). It is no mystery that the former could be glad to endow monumental libraries, excellent laboratories, concert

halls, arboretums, and baseball fields, while the latter simply can't see the profit in it for himself.

There is pressure to transform the public university so that less cost goes into it and more benefit comes out—as such things are reckoned in terms of contemporary economic thinking. That this economics could be so overbearingly sure of itself ought to be remarkable given recent history, but its voice is magnified in the void left by the default of other traditional centers of authority. In any case, whether and how we educate people is still a direct reflection of the degree of freedom we expect them to have, or want them to have. Since printing became established in the West and the great usefulness of literacy began to be recognized, it has been as characteristic of cultures to withhold learning as it has to promote it. Many cultures do both, selectively, and their discrimination has had profound effects that have persisted into the present, as they will certainly persist into the future. In most Western cultures the emergence of literacy in women lagged far behind literacy in men, and in many parts of the world women are still forbidden or discouraged from reading and writing, even though limiting them in this way radically slows economic development, among other things.

Western “progress” is an uncertain road to happiness, I know. But insofar as Western civilization has made a value of freeing the mind by giving it ability and resources, it has been a wondrous phenomenon. Wherever its strong, skilled attention has fallen on the world, it has made some very interesting errors, without doubt, and has also revealed true splendors. In either case it has given us good reason to ponder the mind itself, the character of the human mind that is so richly inscribed on the cultural experience of all of us, in the ways and degrees that we, as individuals, are prepared to read its inscriptions.

“Insofar as.” American civilization assumes literacy, saturates our lives with print. It also fails to make an important minority of its people competent in this skill, which most of us could not imagine living without. Old exclusions come down the generations—we all know that parents are the first teachers. Old injustices come down the generations—why bother to educate people who have no use for education, the hewers of wood and drawers of water? The argument was made that peasants, women, slaves, and industrial workers would be happier knowing nothing about a world that was closed to them in any case. For a very long time that world was closed to them, and they could be assumed to be ignorant of it. To the degree that all this has changed, social equality and mobili-

ty have followed. Many traditional barriers are lower, though they have not yet fallen.

What exactly is the impetus behind the progressive change that was simultaneous with the emergence of modern society? Our era could well be said to have had its origins in a dark age. The emergence of the factory system and mass production brought a degree of exploitation for which even feudalism had no equivalent. The severest possible cheapening of labor in early industry was supported by the same theories that



drove colonialism and chattel slavery. The system yielded spectacular wealth, of course, islands of wealth that depended on extreme poverty and the profounder impoverishments of slavery. Comparisons are made between slavery and so-called free labor that seem always to imply the second was more efficient than the first, and therefore destined, on economic grounds, to become the dominant system, which would mean a general amelioration of conditions. It is a very imprecise use of language, however, to describe as free a labor force that was largely composed of children, who, on the testimony of Benjamin Disraeli among many others, could not and did not expect to live far beyond childhood. It is an imprecise use of language to call free the great class of laborers who, outside the parishes where they were born, had no rights even to shelter. The fact of social progress has been treated as a

demonstration that laissez-faire works for us all, that the markets are not only wise but also benign, indeed humane. This argument is based on a history that was effectively invented to serve it, and on a quasi theology of economic determinism, a monotheism that cannot entertain the possibility that social circumstances might have any other origin than economics. Clever as we think we are, we are enacting again the strange—and epochal—tendency of Western civilization to impoverish.

We have come to a place where these assumptions are being tested against reality, if not in our universities and think tanks. Reality is



that turbulent region our thoughts visit seldom and briefly, like Baedeker tourists eager to glimpse the sights that will confirm their expectations and put them on shared conversational ground with decades of fellow tourists. We leave trash on Mount Everest, we drop trash in the sea, and reality goes on with its life, reacting to our depredations as it must while ages pass, continents clash, and infernos boil over. It is true that our carelessness affects the world adversely, and it is also true that the world can fetch autochthonous surprises up out of its fiery belly. The metaphor is meant to suggest that we are poor observers, rarely seeing more than we intend to see. Our expectations are received, and therefore static, which makes it certain that

they will be like nothing in reality. Still, we bring our expectations with us, and we take them home with us again, reinforced.

Historical time also has a fiery belly and a capacity for devastating eruptions. It has equivalents for drought and desert, for glaciation. Its atmosphere can dim and sicken. Any reader of history knows this. If the changes that occur in the past are substantially the result of human activity, they nevertheless rarely reflect human intention, at least when they are viewed in retrospect. They seem always to elude human notice until they are irreversible, overwhelming.

Western civilization once had a significant place among world cultures in articulating a sense of vastness and richness through its painting, poetry, music, architecture, and philosophy. Then, rather suddenly, this great, ancient project was discountenanced altogether. The sacred was declared a meaningless category, a name for something compounded of fear, hope, and ignorance, the forgivable error of an earlier age that was configured around certain ancient tales and ceremonies. That it yielded works of extraordinary beauty and profundity was acknowledged fulsomely in modernist nostalgia, whose exponents saw themselves as the victims of the transformations they had announced, and, to a considerable degree, created. Grand-scale change was imminent and inevitable, of course. Empires were falling, technology was rising. Whether the new age needed to bring with it this mawkish gloom is another question.

I propose that the thought we call modern was by no means robust and coherent enough intellectually to discredit metaphysics or theology, though it did discredit them. To account for this I would suggest that modernism's appeal to the upper strata of culture was the way that it closed questions rather than opening them. Modernism's nostalgias made it resistant to reform, and excused it from giving a rational defense for that resistance. It created the narrative of a breach with the European past by ignoring European history. After the horrors of the First World War, Europe seems to have comforted itself by arming for the Second World War. That is to say, humankind has always given itself occasions for grief and despair, and has seldom made better use of them than to store up grudges and provocations to prepare the next occasion.

Human cultural achievements may be thought of as somewhat separate from these periodic rampages. There are no grounds for thinking that high civilizations are less violent than any others—no grounds, that is, except in the histories and anthropologies that are written by them. So long as warfare and other enor-

mities are treated as paradoxical, anomalous, and aberrant, we will lack a sufficiently complex conception of humankind. History can tell us that neither side of our nature precludes the other. The badness of the worst we do does not diminish the goodness of the best we do. That our best is so often artistic rather than utilitarian, in the usual senses of both words, is a truth with which we should learn to be at peace.

Since Plato at least, the arts have been under attack on the grounds that they have no useful role in society. They are under attack at present. We have convinced ourselves that the role of the middle ranks of our population is to be useful to the economy—more precisely, to the future economy, of which we know nothing for certain but can imagine to be as unlike the present situation as the present is unlike the order that prevailed a few decades ago. If today is

that cheap labor will give its employers a competitive advantage, and that costly labor will drive industries into extinction or into foreign markets. (Oddly, the monstrously costly executives who work in these industries seem never to have this effect.) Nineteenth-century economics told us that labor both creates value and is the greatest expense in the production of value. When Marx wrote about these things he was using a vocabulary that is still descriptive, and therefore useful, now. Nationalism was involved in all this, historically. The colonial system, which was entirely bound up with trade and industry, enjoyed the power and the grandeur of the old European empires. The global reach of the early industrial system made mass poverty a national asset, as it remains. According to the theory that rationalized the system, a worker's wage should not exceed

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any guide, we can anticipate further profound disruption. Whatever coherence the economy has created in the culture to this point cannot be assumed. The reverence paid to economic forces, as well as the accelerating accumulation of wealth in very few hands, increasingly amounts to little more than faceless people with no certain qualifications playing with money, and enforces the belief that our hopes must be surrendered to these forces. The coherence that society might take from politics—that is, from the consciousness that it is a polity, a human community with a history and an aspiration toward democracy, the latter of which requires a capacity for meaningful decisions about its life and direction—exists apart from these forces and is at odds with them. So far as those forces are determining, and so long as they succeed in defining utility, value, and legitimacy for the rest of us, we will have surrendered even the thought of creating a society that can sustain any engagement or purpose beyond that endless openness and submissiveness to other people's calculations and objectives that we call competition.

At the moment, two propositions are taken to be true: that our society must be disciplined and trained to compete in a global market, and that these competitive skills have no definable character. Who might not be displaced by a computer or a robot? Who might not be displaced by a foreign worker or an adjunct? Economics from its brutal beginnings has told us

the level necessary for his subsistence, that is, the minimum level necessary to leave him, more probably her, physically able to work. This brazen law, as they called it, is still in force in many of those societies with which we are told we are competing.

The most obvious evidence that the United States proceeded for a long time on other assumptions is our educational system, which is now seen by many people as an obstacle to recruiting ourselves to the great project of competing in the world economy. If it is no longer clear what these singular institutions should be doing, it is pretty clear what they should not be doing, which is disseminating knowledge and culture, and opening minds. The dominant view today is that the legitimate function of a university is not to prepare people for citizenship in a democracy but to prepare them to be members of a skilled but docile working class.

It has been characteristic of American education to offer students a variety of fields of study and a great freedom to choose among them. This arrangement has served as a mighty paradigm for the kind of self-discovery that Americans have historically valued. Now this idea has gone into eclipse. The freedom of the individual has been reduced to a right to belligerent ignorance coupled with devotion to a particular reading of the Second Amendment. Other than this, Americans are offered a future in which their particular interests, gifts, and

values will have minimal likelihood of expression, since those interests, gifts, and values are not likely to suit the uses of whatever employment is on offer. Americans today must give up the thought of shaping their own lives, of having even the moral or political right to try to stabilize them against the rigors and uncertainties of the markets, those great gods. All this speculation assumes, of course, something that has never been true in this country, that society and the economy will be dominated by great industries that make more or less uniform demands of their workers, as those primordial cotton mills did. We are encouraged to accept the inevitability of a dystopia, our brightest hope being that we or our children will do better than most people.

An early step in making all this inevitable is the attack on higher education, a resurgence of that old impulse to force society into the form that is considered natural and necessary, an impulse that grows stronger whenever society as it exists seems recalcitrant. In general, of course, our system of higher education could hardly be less suited to serve the unspecific but urgent purposes of the future economy that has been imagined for us, which really bears more resemblance to our forgotten past, the dark age, that taught the few how to wring benefits from cheapening the labor, that is to say, depressing the living standards, of the many. This object has been mightily assisted by high levels of unemployment and by access to labor markets in countries where severe poverty is endemic.

One rationale for all this is that Western prosperity sprang from the dark age of early industrialism. *Post hoc, ergo propter hoc*. This is a tendentious reading of a very complex history. Henry Ford's realization that workers should be paid enough to be able to afford the things they made, an inversion of the old model, might have come from his experiencing the limits of what Marx quite accurately called the expropriation of the worker. The so-called consumer society of midcentury America took notice of Ford's innovation. A living wage was a novel idea, an object of derision at home and abroad; it is what we are losing now as unemployment and the exploitation of cheap labor in other countries exert a downward pressure on wages here. A consumer society is one in which people can engage in discretionary spending. It is characteristic of Americans that whatever they are or do is what they also ridicule and lament. But the margin above that grim old standard of subsistence is the margin of personal freedom. And, granting fads and excesses, interesting uses have been made of it.

As one important instance, for a long time, by global and historical standards, we have edu-

cated a great many people at great cost. Our discretionary spending has also been expressed as a willingness to be taxed for the common benefit. Without question the institutions that we have created have added tremendous wealth to society over time. But we have been talked out of the kind of pragmatism that would allow us to say: This works. No comparably wealthy society has proceeded on the utilitarian principles that would ration access to learning in the name of improving a workforce. One might reply that there has never been a country to compare with the United States in terms of wealth. True enough. But one conclusion we might draw from this state of affairs is that what we did worked. At very least, our promotion of education has not impeded the great cause of wealth accumulation that is never the stated object of competition, any more than are liberty, the pursuit of happiness, the general welfare, or, indeed, the examined life. By competition's atavistic lights we should be prepared to navigate uncharted seas, assuming always that nothing else is offered or owed to us but work, which is itself highly conditional, and allowed to us only so long as no cheaper arrangement can be found. With all the urgency of this argument, holding up to us this dismal, threatening future, no mention is made that great wealth will indeed accumulate.

The most efficient system ever devised for the distribution of wealth is a meaningful wage. The most effective means of depressing wages is the mobility of capital, which can move overnight to a more agreeable climate. Our workers—that is, all of us, more or less—are already prepared to understand that, in abandoning America, capital is only obeying the brazen law. There will be a hint of rebuke, as there is now, that we failed to be competitive, which might have something to do with currency fluctuations, or with the misfortune of living in a place that is a little too fastidious in the matter of breathable air and drinkable water. This rebuke will echo through society, demonstrating to many the absolute need to jettison these standards, their immediate cost precluding any thought of their long-term benefit. Public health, too, is distributive, since it entails particular costs to achieve a general benefit that is associated with a society's ability to prosper. (I avoid the more familiar term "redistributive," which implies that there is a real, prior ownership of wealth that exists before society's portion. This notion is not supportable, philosophically or economically, though at the moment it is very powerful indeed.)

There is a great scrum going on, now and also forever, since this model of economy has taken

over so much of the world. China seems to be slowing, so India will emerge, presumably, as the next great competitor. We will marvel at the vast increase in one measure or another of its well-being, as we always do, which would occur in any country with a big enough population, since there are smart people everywhere, and since infusions of money and industrial technology will have these effects anywhere. The country's middle class will expand—as ours would, given capital for new infrastructure and manufacturing, though our past growth would mean that any future increases were less dramatic. And, at some point, these measures of the prosperity of, say, India would begin to be presented to us as an alarming trend. They would be taken to mean that we were about to be vanquished, left in the dusts of mediocrity and decline. Our cult of competition does not seem able to entertain the idea that two or more countries might flourish simultaneously, unless, of course, they are European. It does not permit the thought that our response to the economic rise of India or China or Brazil might properly be to say: Good for them. This is the result of the old habits of nationalism. We are always ready to be persuaded that we are under threat. While care for our terrain and our people and our future can be tarnished as socialism, to be swept up in a general alarm that impoverishes all of those is presented as somehow American. What nonsense.

Let us call the stripping down of our society for the purposes of our supposed economic struggle with the world the expropriation of our workers. Academics have made absurd uses of Marx's categories so often that even alluding to those categories involves risks. But Marx was critiquing political economy, and so am I. And nothing was more powerful in that brutal old system, now resurgent, than low wages. Americans think that Marx was criticizing America, an error of epochal consequence, and one that is propagated in the university as diligently as in any right-wing think tank. They think that political economy, that is, capitalism, was our invention and is the genius of our civilization—the greatest ever, by the grace of capitalism, so they say. Indeed, unread books may govern the world, and not well, since they are so often taken to justify our worst impulses and prejudices. (The Bible is a case in point.)

It is certainly true that as colonies created as extensions of the British industrial system, involving notoriously the Atlantic slave trade, our earliest beginnings have always haunted us and harmed us, too. Still, access to land, scarcity of labor and labor's mobility, and the communitarian ethos of the northern

colonies changed the economy in fact, then in theory. The iron law of wages lacked the conditions that enforced it in the old country. If Jefferson's "happiness" is given its frequent eighteenth-century meaning—i.e., prosperity or thriving—then the pursuit of happiness, a level of life above subsistence, would become possible as it had not been for any but the most exceptional members of the British working class. If the system described by political economy is capitalism, then the American colonies began to veer away from capitalism long before the Revolution. In this new environment only chattel slavery could preserve certain of its essential features, notably the immobilization of a workforce that was maintained at the level of subsistence, and a radical polarization of wealth. These were the plantations of the British industrial system, producing cotton for the mills of Manchester. It is remarkable how often they are treated as if they were preindustrial, precapitalist, as if cotton and indigo were comestibles and sugar a dietary staple, and as if the whole arrangement did not run on credit and speculation.

Obviously I am critical of the universities too. They give prestige to exactly the kind of thinking that undermines their own existence as humanist institutions, especially in economics but also in many fields that are influenced by economics, for example psychologies that subject all actions and interactions to cost-benefit analysis, to—the phrase should make us laugh—rational choice. And this bleeds, of course, into the humanities, which are utterly, hopelessly anomalous by these lights, and have run for cover to critical theory. In every case the conception of what a human being is, and with it the thought of what she might be, is made tedious and small. The assumption now current, that the test of a university is its success in vaulting graduates into the upper tiers of wealth and status, obscures the fact that the United States is an enormous country, and that many of its best and brightest may prefer a modest life in Maine or South Dakota. Or in Iowa, as I find myself obliged to say from time to time. It obscures the fact that there is a vast educational culture in this country, unlike anything else in the world. It emerged from a glorious sense of the possible and explored and enhanced the possible through the spread of learning. If it seems to be failing now, that may be because we have forgotten what the university is for, why the libraries are built like cathedrals and surrounded by meadows and flowers. They are a tribute and an invitation to the young, who can and should make the world new, out of the unmapped and unbounded resource of their minds. ■

THE ROGUE AGENCY

A USDA program that tortures dogs and kills endangered species

By Christopher Ketcham

One morning in the fall of 1980, Rex Shaddox got a call from his supervisor at the Uvalde, Texas, office of Animal Damage Control. Shaddox had worked for Animal Damage Control, which was then a branch of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, for seventeen months. His job was to trap and kill wild carnivores, coyotes in particular, that were said to prey on the flocks of local sheep ranchers.

The supervisor, Charles Brown, told Shaddox to meet with his fellow agents at the city dump outside town. "We're gonna do some M-44 tests," Brown said. "With dogs." The M-44, a spring-loaded device that is planted in the ground and ejects sodium cyanide when set off, was among the weapons used by Animal Damage Control to kill coyotes.

When Shaddox arrived at the dump, he found Brown and several colleagues standing over a pit of stinking garbage. A truck from the Uvalde city pound pulled up. It

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contained abandoned dogs of various breeds. The pound officer removed a small collie from the truck, and Brown took it by the neck. The animal, docile and quiet, stared at its captors.

Brown brandished an M-44 cartridge. He forced the dog's mouth open and, with his thumb, released the trigger on the device. It sprayed a white dust of cyanide into the collie's mouth.

The dog howled. It convulsed. It coughed blood. It screamed in pain. The animals in the truck heard its wailing. They beat against their cages and cried out.

"All right," said Brown to his trappers. "See, this stuff may be out of date, but it still works." He opened a capsule of amyl nitrite under the collie's nose.

Amyl nitrite is an immediate antidote to cyanide poisoning.

The collie heaved and wheezed. Brown then seized it and unleashed another M-44 dose. The dog screamed again. Shaddox started yelling, telling Brown to stop. Brown kicked the collie into the garbage pit.

"He and the other trappers thought it was funny," Shaddox told me. "It's convulsing and dying, and he's

laughing. And this is what he's teaching his men. That was just a hell of a way to die. No sympathy, no feeling, no nothing. I'm no animal-rights guy. But heartless bastards is all they were. Right there, that's the culture. And these are federal employees. This is what your government is doing to animals."

Shaddox quit his job after a series of disputes with Brown over the incident in Uvalde. He went on to a long career in wildlife law enforcement, and spent not a small part of it investigating his former employer.

Over the years, Animal Damage Control has been known by many names. At its founding, in 1885, it was the Branch of Economic Ornithology. It became the Bureau of Bio-

logical Survey in 1905, and was known as the Division of Predatory Animal and Rodent Control in the 1920s. In 1985, the agency became a part of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and in 1997, its name was changed from Animal Damage Control to Wildlife Services. The agency's purpose, however, has never changed. "The focus of a government trapper is protecting the livestock industry by killing predators," said Carter Niemeyer, a retired Wildlife Services agent. "Ranchers call us up, and the system kicks in, guns blazing."

Since 2000, Wildlife Services operatives have killed at least 2 million native mammals and 15 million native birds. Many of these animals are iconic in the American West and beloved by the public. Several are listed as endangered or threatened under the Endangered Species Act. In 2014, Wildlife Services killed 322 wolves, 61,702 coyotes, 2,930 foxes, 580 black bears, 796 bobcats, five golden eagles, and three bald eagles. The agency also killed tens of thousands of beavers, squirrels, and prairie dogs. The goal of this slaughter, according to the agency's literature, is to provide "federal leadership and expertise to resolve wildlife conflicts and create a balance that allows people and wildlife to coexist peacefully." The 1931 Animal Damage Control Act, the agency's enabling legislation, directs it to "conduct campaigns for the destruction or control" of any "animals injurious to agriculture."

By the time Niemeyer retired, in 2000, after twenty-five years at the agency, he had personally killed hundreds of coyotes and had overseen the deaths of thousands more. On some days, working in Montana, Niemeyer skinned ten coyotes an hour as helicopters hauled the heaped carcasses in from the backcountry. (The government sold the skins for revenue.) Wildlife Services gunned down coyotes from airplanes and helicopters. Its trappers used poison baits, cyanide traps, leghold traps, and neck snares. They hauled coyote pups from dens with lengths of barbed wire, strangled them, or clubbed them. Sometimes

they set the animals on fire in the dens, or suffocated them with explosive cartridges of carbon monoxide. "We joked about using napalm," Niemeyer told me.

Despite the agency's efforts to wipe out coyotes, they returned in larger numbers. "During my career, it was decades of the same thing repeated to no effect," said Niemeyer. "I think the word for this behavior is 'insanity.' But Wildlife Services has not changed, because their activities are under the public radar, and no one knows how to reform them. Their program fits the western states' obsession with killing predators."

Peter DeFazio, a Democratic congressman from Oregon, has repeatedly called for a congressional investigation of Wildlife Services, describing it as a "rogue agency" that is "secretive" and "unaccountable." He said that he considers the lethal control program a "wasteful subsidy" and has called the agency's practices "cruel and inhumane." DeFazio has proposed legislation to reduce government funding for lethal control, but Congress, under pressure from the livestock industry, rejected these attempts at reform.

"We have seen a host of credible leaked information from credible former employees about the inhumane practices," DeFazio told me recently. He said he has asked Wildlife Services for "detailed numbers about finances and operations, and they won't give us this information. I've served on the Homeland Security Committee, and Wildlife Services is more difficult to get information from than our intelligence agencies."

When I went to Idaho in June 2014 to document what Wildlife Services calls "control actions," I asked the agency if I could accompany its trappers in the field. I was told by a spokeswoman that this was not possible. She explained that "only wildlife-management professionals or persons directly involved are allowed on operations, in order to conduct a safe operation."

I called up Lynne Stone, a wildlife advocate who lives in Ketchum, Idaho, to ask about probable locations for control actions in the state that summer.

Stone had cultivated sources—which she refused to disclose—who fed her this highly guarded information.

We met in a café in Hailey, ten miles south of Ketchum. Stone told me that the killing of wolves by Wildlife Services was "merciless and indiscriminate." In July 2012, for example, trappers discovered four wolf pups holed up in a culvert near Idaho City. The pups were killed immediately. The reason, according to Wildlife Services, was that a single sheep had been killed by one or several "offending" wolves from a pack in the area. "Wolves generally give birth around mid-April, so these four pups were likely just over three months old," Stone told me. "They were totally dependent on their pack to feed them. How can three-month-old pups be 'offending'?"

Stone had gotten word that a wolf named B450, a gray male that was the four hundred and fiftieth wolf to be radio-collared by the state's Department of Fish and Game, was on the move in the Sawtooth Valley, forty miles to the north. In 2009, B450 had survived the destruction of his father, mother, brothers, and sisters, who were alleged to have attacked livestock near the town of Stanley, Idaho, and were shot by Wildlife Services trappers in airplanes and helicopters. For two years, B450 had wandered central Idaho alone, but in the spring of 2012 he found a mate, who bore him three pups. They formed a new pack. It was likely, Stone told me, that B450's pack would encounter cattle and sheep grazing on the valley's lush summer grass, and that Wildlife Services would be called in if the wolves opted to prey on the ready meat.

A day after talking with Stone, I drove to the Sawtooth Valley with Natalie Ertz, the founder of WildLands Defense, a nonprofit that monitors wolf packs and their habitats. As we traveled on a dirt road near the headwaters of the Salmon River, Ertz listened on her radio monitor, hoping for a transmission from B450's collar. A storm blew in from the west, the temperature plummeted, and the sky shook with snow. "Wait," she said. She got out of the truck to inspect a frozen pile of scat in the road. It was the leaving of a coyote.

We drove on, and passed a man on a horse who was herding several dozen bleating sheep. “Tasty little meals for a wolf,” Ertz said. She admitted that she didn’t like ranchers. “It’s not personal,” she said. “It’s that ranchers, as a means of doing business, get Wildlife Services to kill wolves for them.”

That night we found a campsite on a benchland under tall pines. We set our tents and built a fire and listened again for the chirrup of B450 on the receiver. Ertz stood up and howled in the night, but no answer came. Not even the coyotes sang.

We listened again for the signal in the morning, hiking through the wet forest after the storm had passed and the weather had warmed. Nothing. “That’s good,” said Ertz. “Farther away he is from people, the better.”

Two weeks later, on June 29, after we were gone from the Sawtooth Valley, a calf was allegedly killed by one wolf or several. The calf’s owner called Wildlife Services, whose agents set traps to kill “all offending wolves” in the area. By July 2, a yearling called B647, the son of B450, was found near death in a trap and was killed by an agent. On July 9, a subadult female from the pack, B648, was shot by Wildlife Services. It required two more days to bait and catch B450 in a leg-hold trap. A Wildlife Services agent killed him too.

John Peavey is a third-generation rancher in central Idaho who runs 7,000 sheep on Flat Top ranch, which lies fifty miles south of the Sawtooth Valley, and on tens of thousands of acres of adjacent public lands. He served for two decades in the Idaho state senate and worked from a young age at Flat Top. During his time in political office, Peavey was known never to appear in public without a cowboy hat on his head.

I told him I was doing an investigation of Wildlife Services. “I suspect this will be an ugly article,” he said. “But Wildlife Services is pretty vital to our making do. Predators are a big problem for ranchers in the West. It’s our number-one problem. We can’t survive without taking care of the predation.”

Peavey told me that he loses at least 200 sheep a year to predators

and regularly calls Wildlife Services to his aid. In May 2013, he said, he lost more than thirty sheep to wolves. “We were range-lambing, and the wolves come and scatter them to hell and breakfast. One little lamb, about ten minutes old, was killed by a wolf. Really tragic, it just makes you cry—a ten-minute life span.” At Peavey’s request, Wildlife Services used one of the agency’s Piper Cub airplanes to track and shoot six wolves from a pack that was roaming near Flat Top ranch.

Peavey has attempted to use non-lethal methods to dissuade wolves

I ASKED WHETHER WILDLIFE SERVICES WAS ACTING EXTRALEGALLY TODAY.

“I KNOW ABSOLUTELY THAT IT’S STILL GOING ON,” SHADDOX SAID

from attacking his sheep on the range, but he claims that they have had little effect. “My guys are out blaring their radios and flashing their lights and smoking pots—that’s a fifty-five-gallon drum where we build a fire—and we have big guard dogs, one-hundred-pound Pyrenees and Akbash, though wolves often kill our dogs. We’ve probably lost ten to twelve dogs over the last six years.” His wife, Diane Josephy Peavey, who in recent years has read essays on Idaho public radio praising the virtues of ranching, told me, “It’s a little hard to be where we are, with sheep, and watch them get slaughtered, and we’re supposed to put the money in to coexist nonlethally. That’s fine, but it’s a huge expense. Coexistence means the wolves live and all the other animals die.”

John Peavey told me that range-lambing—in which ewes give birth on open public lands rather than in protected sheds on private land—is the only way for ranchers to make a profit. Shed-lambing requires a lot of hay, at great cost. “Six hundred thousand dollars is probably not enough money to outfit a hay crew,” he said. “Shed-lambing is too expensive. Our business model is to range-lamb when

the weather is warm and the grass is growing. And when the wolves come in, it’s incredibly disruptive. We’re very vulnerable.”

Carter Niemeyer, the retired Wildlife Services agent, said that Peavey’s range-lambing operation is also expensive, but the cost gets shifted onto the federal government. “The history of John Peavey over the years has been that when he’s out range-lambing, it’s led to a lot of calls to Wildlife Services for the removal of wolves and coyotes,” he said. “His range-lambing is a long way from home, out there in sagebrush. When the sheep are lambing, the herders aren’t supposed to crowd them. You leave them alone. So you’ve got sheep strung out for miles, ripe for the picking. All you’re doing is inviting attack. In some cases, when you put livestock way out there in the backcountry where it’s beyond the capability of the owner to protect them, it’s a form of animal cruelty.

Do we continue to reward this bad behavior by bringing in gunships to kill predators that are simply reacting to lambs on the range as predators should and must react?”

Niemeyer said that it was galling to watch stockmen use public lands for forage while refusing to accept the real price of their business model. He told me about a former Wildlife Services agent who described sheep ranchers as “cry boys and cheap men”—because, as Niemeyer put it, “they’re always whining and they’re incredibly cheap, demanding the public pay their costs.”

I asked him about Peavey’s claim that predators are the number-one problem facing ranchers. The most recent reports from the National Agricultural Statistics Service, a branch of the USDA, suggest that stockmen annually lose almost 500,000 head to predators nationwide. The USDA data, however, is based on self-reporting by ranchers.

Niemeyer told me I should also look at the methods Wildlife Services used to confirm depredations. The agency was supposed to conduct its own due diligence of ranchers’ reports, but the investigations were farcical. “A rancher calls up and says, ‘Goddamn wolves killed twenty-eight of my stock,’ but he can’t prove

a thing. And we say, 'All right, Charlie, we'll get 'em.' The trapper shows up to the site and toes the carcass of the animal with his boot. 'Yep. Wolf did it.' And that's the investigation. Of course a wolf did it—the rancher says so, which makes it the truth.”

After Rex Shaddox left Wildlife Services, in 1980, he worked as an undercover narcotics cop in Texas and Colorado, an investigator for the Humane Society of the United States, and a wildlife-crimes detective with the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, where he is still posted. He has continued to follow Wildlife Services' activities as a part of his current

banned in 1972, but the State of Wyoming never complied with the destruction order. Instead, Wildlife Services, along with members of the Wyoming Wool Growers Association, the Wyoming Farm Bureau, and the state's Department of Agriculture, secretly sold Compound 1080 to ranchers for use in what Shaddox described as a conspiracy for “the illegal poisoning of wildlife, the illegal lacing of cadavers with poisons on public lands, and the illegal killing of endangered species.” Not one government official implicated in the conspiracy went to jail. “Some of these guys got better jobs in Wildlife Services,” Shaddox said.



job. “If you're a wildlife cop,” he told me, “you constantly hear about Wildlife Services doing bad things.”

Between January 1990 and September 1991, Shaddox led an undercover investigation into the illegal distribution and use of a poison called Compound 1080 in Wyoming. The tasteless, odorless toxin has no known antidote. A single ounce can kill 200 adult humans, or 20,000 coyotes, or 70,000 house cats.

Stockpiles of the poison were supposed to have been destroyed or turned over to the Environmental Protection Agency after it was

Doug McKenna, who retired in 2012 after twenty-five years as a wildlife-crimes enforcement officer at the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, worked with Shaddox on the Wyoming investigation. I asked McKenna whether he thought Wildlife Services had reformed its ways. “I don't believe it for a minute,” he said. “The agency still disregards federal and state environmental, wildlife-protection, and resource regulations.”

He told me about an Arizona rancher named Jose Manterola, who, in 2002, had poisoned—accidentally, by his account—bald eagles that were

roosting on the public-land allotments where he was running sheep. “We went to Wildlife Services and asked them for help with the investigation. The trappers told us, ‘We can't talk to you because this guy is a client of ours.’ I was shocked. We're a federal agency asking another federal agency for help in a criminal investigation, and we were stonewalled. We eventually prosecuted the rancher, and his federal grazing lease was revoked, but we got no help from Wildlife Services.”

When domestic pets were accidentally killed by poisons that had been distributed by Wildlife Services, Shaddox told me, the motto was “Shoot, shovel, and shut up.” Shaddox said that Charles Brown, the supervisor who poisoned the collie with M-44, ordered him to “cover up the killing of these nontarget dogs, to remove the collars and bury the dead animals, and make sure always to separate the collars and the bodies.” (Brown, who is now the agency's eastern regional director, declined to comment for this article.)

I asked Shaddox whether he believed that Wildlife Services was acting extralegally today. “I know absolutely that it's still going on,” he said. “I hear it from state and federal wildlife agents. I know absolutely that the cover-up of the illegal killing of domestic pets, the illegal poisoning of wildlife, and the illegal use of 1080 and M-44s is still going on.”

Samuel Sanders, another former trapper I spoke with, worked for Wildlife Services in Nevada for seven years. He rose to the rank of supervisor before quitting in 2011. “Violating both federal and state law when it comes to the application of pesticides is encouraged by Wildlife Services,” Sanders told me. Employees, he said, weren't properly certified for the use of poisons in the field. “The certification test was fixed so that employees always pass. The supervisor reads the answers off to employees.”

Shortly before he quit, Sanders filed a complaint against Wildlife Services in the federal Merit Systems Protection Board court, charging that his higher-ups retaliated against him for whistleblowing about the agency's violations of federal and state law. The judge dismissed the case on a technicality.

"Although many employees have witnessed some of their co-workers and even supervisors violate laws," Sanders told me, "they say nothing, fearing the retaliation they've witnessed when others have reported the violations. They think it will just stop happening after time, but it doesn't. They know the supervisors are aware of the violations. When an employee does report violations by W.S. employees or management, upper management

ently committed acts of animal cruelty" that violated the agency's directives about trapped wildlife. Those directives include instructions that trapped animals "be dispatched immediately" and that employees "exhibit a high level of respect and professionalism when taking an animal's life."

An internal investigation by Wildlife Services concluded that the trapped coyote was being used by Olson to train his dogs "how to

tion about a pending lethal-control action against a pack of wolves in Moyer Basin, a remote valley of the Yellowjacket Mountains, where Wildlife Services agents, according to our source, would be out prowling the sky in one of the Piper Cubs, a noisy yellow single-prop known as the Killer Bee.

We camped on a forested bluff overlooking the valley. We'd have a fine view of the airplane's kill zone. The landscape was splendid. The soft-contoured mountains faded in distant blue shrouds, the great forests of conifers sighed in the breeze, the autumn aspens glowed in the slant light of the afternoon sun, and the rich bottomlands were flooded behind beaver dams. "Prime wolf habitat," Ertz said.

A September storm erupted during the night and bent our tents, pelting us with rain and sleet, and soaking our sleeping bags. Ertz awoke before me, keeping his ear to the sky at dawn. But no Killer Bee.

Over breakfast he recounted the two days he'd spent in the spring of 2010 looking for members of the Buffalo Ridge wolf pack, which he heard had been targeted with a kill order. The pack had been seen near Squaw Creek, a tributary of the Salmon River that ran seventy-five miles south of Moyer Basin. Ertz arrived before the trappers, ascended through an aspen grove, and found where the pack was denning. The adults were on a hunt, and had left their pups behind. The afternoon was overcast, Ertz said, and threatening rain. Each time the thunder rumbled, the pups, young and innocent, howled in response, volleying their high-pitched cries in a kind of conversation with the sky. "It was one of the most profoundly wild experiences of my life," Ertz told me.

Ertz and I set out in his car, driving up and down rough dirt roads for several hours until at midday we found a flatbed Ford parked in a meadow next to a stream. The decals on the door said USDA, and a ramp attached to the bed suggested that it had carried an A.T.V. whose driver was off in the backcountry.



does a token investigation to cover up the incident. Even the national leaders in D.C. have been made aware of this, and they do the same thing."

In 2012, a Wildlife Services trapper named Jamie Olson posted a series of graphic photos to Facebook that appeared to depict his dogs attacking and killing a coyote caught in a leg trap in Wyoming. He included portraits of himself smiling beside a coyote's mutilated cadaver. (Olson declined to comment for this article.)

In response to the photos, Peter DeFazio wrote a letter to Thomas Vilsack, the secretary of the USDA, requesting an audit of "the culture within Wildlife Services." His letter stated that Olson "may have appar-

'posture' when confronting a trapped coyote." Shaddox scoffed at this account. "I've read the report and findings and looked at the photos. The dogs are absolutely attacking and killing the coyote in the series of pictures," he told me.

Olson was not fired or reprimanded for his treatment of the coyote. His behavior, according to Wildlife Services documents, "violated no existing rules."

In September 2014, I drove into Idaho's Salmon-Challis National Forest with Natalie Ertz's brother, Brian, who had spent many hundreds of hours tracking Wildlife Services trappers to document their kills. We had gotten informa-

There was a warning on a fence post nearby:

MECHANICAL DEVICES (TRAPS, SNARES, OR OTHER RESTRAINING DEVICES) HAVE BEEN PLACED IN THIS AREA TO CAPTURE ANIMALS CAUSING DAMAGE OR HARM. THESE DEVICES AND THE ANIMALS CAPTURED IN THEM ARE THE PROPERTY OF THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT.

The notice had been issued by Wildlife Services.

We waited. After two hours, an A.T.V. came trundling toward us, driven by a trapper in his thirties who wore a hooded sweatshirt and a trucker's cap. Strapped across the dashboard was a four-foot pole with a loop at its end. The loop is meant to cinch around a wolf's neck so that an animal can be killed without close contact.

The trapper wouldn't give his name. I asked him about the trapping of wolves in Moyer Basin. "I'm not supposed to be talking to you," he said. "Talk to Todd Grimm"—referring to the Idaho state director of Wildlife Services.

Indicating the nearby sign, I asked what kinds of traps he was using, where they were located, and whether they posed a risk to the public. "Talk to Todd," he said. "That sign has warned you, and that's all I'm going to say."

When I asked for a phone interview with Wildlife Services, Lyndsay Cole, an assistant director of public affairs at the USDA, asked me to provide all my questions in writing. I submitted thirty-five questions related to specific points in this article and to Wildlife Services policy as a whole. Cole didn't answer the questions; instead, she emailed me a single-page statement with links to various public-relations documents the agency had put out. "Wildlife Services experts use a science-based Integrated Wildlife Damage Management (IWDMM) decision-making model," the statement said. "Activities are conducted to minimize negative impacts to overall native wildlife populations." Cole eventually responded to questions sent by a fact-checker

from this magazine. She stated, in part, "We aren't able to speculate on methods that may have been used against policy in the past," and called the examples of agency misbehavior "not representative." When I asked Wildlife Services if I could talk with Todd Grimm, the agency did not respond to the request.

Once, during Carter Niemeyer's time with Wildlife Services in Montana, a sheep rancher asked him whether coyotes killed for revenge. "Of course not," Niemeyer told him. "Why do you ask?" Wildlife Services had recently mounted an aerial-gunning campaign in the hills around the rancher's property to strike at coyotes before they could take sheep. The result of the cull, the perplexed rancher explained, was increased depredation.

Rob Wielgus, a wildlife ecologist at Washington State University, has an explanation for this paradox. In 2013, he examined data that showed that the hunting of adult male cougars led to more attacks on livestock by the remaining cat population. "Killing older resident cats resulted in a huge influx of teenage male cats," Wielgus told me. "The teenage males are the livestock depredators. The older cats were cops that kept the younger troublemakers out."

In 2014, Wielgus published a similar study of wolves and their attacks on livestock in Idaho, Wyoming, and Montana. He reviewed the number of wolves that were killed annually over twenty-five years and the number of depredations of livestock for each year, and declared that the livestock industry was "not going to be happy" with his conclusion: Kill more wolves, he said, and depredations on livestock increase.

Wielgus believes that lethal assaults on predators produce social chaos in their populations. "We've now seen this in grizzlies, black bears, cougars, leopards, and wolves. Social disruption is a huge negative effect. Why is the livestock lobby unhappy with this? Because they want to kill predators. They cannot believe the scientific evidence.

They're convinced that the only good predator is a dead predator."

Niemeyer had told me to read the work of Robert Crabtree, an ecologist and the founder of the Yellowstone Ecological Research Center. Crabtree found that more coyote pups within a given litter survive if their numbers are culled. Not only are there more attacks on livestock following lethal control of coyotes—there are also more coyotes. Wildlife Services has killed nearly a million coyotes during the past decade, but the number of coyotes in the seventeen Western states today has remained the same.

"We keep family units broken up, leading to a lot of dispersal, a lot of subadult coyotes moving into other country after their families are broken, and younger coyotes breeding sooner than they would if they weren't thrown into being alone," Niemeyer said. "It's all very self-serving for the Wildlife Services program. You create steady work by steady persecution."

In 1998, Peter DeFazio sponsored an amendment to reduce funding to Wildlife Services by \$10 million, from a total budget of \$50 million. The bill passed in the House by a vote of 229 to 193. Then the American Farm Bureau went into action, bombarding members with phone calls and faxes. House Republican Joe Skeen, a New Mexico stockman whose ranch had been visited ninety-nine times by Animal Damage Control agents between 1991 and 1996, led the assault on the amendment. Within twenty-four hours, the House took the unusual step of revoting the bill. Thirty-eight lawmakers switched their votes from yes to no. "I've seen such a revote happen perhaps a half-dozen times in twenty-one years in Congress," DeFazio told me.

In 2011, he tried again. He sponsored an amendment to the House agriculture appropriations bill to cut \$11 million from Wildlife Services' budget. The amendment, which would have returned the money to the federal treasury for deficit reduction, was endorsed by Taxpayers



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for Common Sense, the Humane Society, and the Natural Resources Defense Council. It was defeated.

In 2012, DeFazio introduced a bill called the Compound 1080 and Sodium Cyanide Elimination Act, which would have banned the deployment of sodium cyanide for predator control and the use of Compound 1080 for any purpose. The bill died in committee.

Jonathan Lovvorn, the chief counsel at the Humane Society of the United States, says that he has tried and failed to rein in Wildlife Services through the court system. The agency's statutory mandate "just says, 'Kill wildlife,' without any restrictions," he told me. "There really is no law to apply that might restrain the agency, even with a sympathetic judge."

Recently, I spoke on the phone with Brooks Fahy, the executive director of Predator Defense, a nonprofit group based in Oregon. Fahy has spent more than thirty years monitoring Wildlife Services. He doesn't see much hope. "The political power of livestock is too strong," he said. I asked Fahy about the Wildlife Services Reform Act, which DeFazio drafted but failed to propose in the last session. It would have banned aerial gunning, along with the use of neck and foot snares and M-44 cyanide devices, and mandated the housing of livestock behind barriers during lambing and calving season. It would have also required that "all available and viable nonlethal management and control methods" be attempted before lethal control is implemented. The nonlethal methods include electric fencing to shock and dissuade predators; "harassment and scaring devices," namely "pyrotechnics and noise-makers, trained dogs, effigies, electronic devices such as recorded distress calls"; and "lights such as spotlights, strobe lights, and lasers."

The bill itself was a compromise, fashioned to be politically acceptable to ranching interests by promoting the idea that livestock and predators can coexist on public lands. Fahy was skeptical. "We can have more fencing, sirens, and strobe lights," he said, "but at what cost to the ecosystem and the wildlife?" And in

the end it may be, as John Peavey's experience suggests, that these measures will not work. Wolves, after all, were designed to eat sheep.

In the meantime, the lethal-control methods continue to bear unintended consequences. In 1998, Bill Guerra Addington, a third-generation Texan, tripped an antiquated M-44 that was designed to fire a .38 Special cartridge. He nearly lost his hand to the bullet. "I equate these predator-killing devices to land mines designed to kill people," he wrote in a letter to DeFazio. In 2003, Dennis Slaugh, a rockhound from Vernal, Utah, pulled at an M-44 out of curiosity and was sprayed in the face with white poison dust. He began vomiting and rushed to a hospital. The cyanide has lingered in his system and is slowly starving his body of oxygen.

Brooks Fahy said that he has received several hundred reports from pet owners about the disappearance of dogs and cats owing to what the owners claim were Wildlife Services activities. He told me the story of a pit bull named Bella, who was killed in Texas, in 2011, by an M-44 trap. The trap was placed less than a thousand feet from the doorstep of Angel and J. D. Walker, the dog's owners. According to Fahy, the trapper had received special permission from Wildlife Services to kill coyotes outside his normally assigned duty areas as a favor to his father, who leased ranchland adjacent to the Walkers' property. The Walkers found Bella dead ninety feet from the trap. Her mouth was bloody. She had vomited. "She had a horrible, weird smell, not just a death smell," said Angel.

The Walkers buried their dog, and the next day they complained to Michael J. Bodenchuk, the agency's Texas director. "He never responded to us at all," said Angel. The following week, the local trapper reset the M-44s that he had placed near the Walkers' house, including the one that had killed Bella. One afternoon, returning home from school with her sons, Angel found three freshly killed coyotes hung on the fence along the road, with wire tied around their necks. She considered it a message from Wildlife Services. ■

1 8 6 1

ABOUT THE FOX AND THE FOX-HUNTERS

By Thomas Bangs Thorpe

The fox at last felt the necessity of a run for his life, for he mounted the bluff, stopped a moment to breathe the fresh air, and chose his course across the country. The dogs had now gathered in a solid group, and were running with the precision of machinery. In a few moments they crossed the old field, and lost themselves in the blue distance. One or two hunters now came to where we were stationed, and suggested that we should cross the course taken by the fox; and with this idea we started off, a fine horseman in the lead. On we dashed, on pleasantly and swiftly, our fair lady companion gracefully flying over the obstructions in the way of her horse's feet, her face flushed with the excitement of health, and her eyes glowing with unusual beauty and intelligence. It was no trifling matter for me, unaccustomed to such associations and pursuits, to be assured, as we sped along, that we were not to meet with a fox-hunter's death; for at times we fairly flew through the air; but ahead, calm and joyous, rode our fair companion.

We soon came in hearing distance of the dogs, and reining up, the pack, in full cry, passed a little to the left of our course, and in a moment more they dashed by with lightning speed. As they descended from the high ground to where we had stationed ourselves to see them pass, we looked at them in full front, and their wide-extended mouths, their long pendent tongues, misty

breath, and strangely flashing eyes suggested that they had, by the magic of the chase, been changed from their natural character into flaming fiends. Fearful and courageous as

protect him. Our party of observation now galloped toward the point which was destined to witness the termination of the hunt, and ere we reached it Reynard had yielded up his life.



they looked, poor Reynard, whose brush was somewhat lowered, seemed more distressed than he really was by contrast.

My fair companion now gave me many hints which were valuable to my inexperience, and with particular animation informed me that "Fanny" and "Rashly" were still in the van, and that she knew they would be first to seize the fox. The struggle that followed was short. The fox once more left the open ground, but the dense forest only served to impede his progress, not to

The dogs and horses, a few moments before so active, were now standing with nostrils widely opened for breath, their sides heaving, and their bodies covered with foam. The hunters, however, were, if possible, gayer than ever, all talking together, and all relating some extraordinary incident connected with the chase. Our fair Diana was gallantly awarded the brush, the end of which she playfully rubbed across the eyes of her favorite steed, and then handed it to a young gallant who had distinguished himself by his fearless riding. A few words of acknowledgment passed, and the two, accompanied by an old servant, bade us adieu and started homeward, leaving the hunters to the enjoyment of the more boisterous humors of the day.

Dinner was finally announced, and reposing Oriental fashion on the soft carpet of grass, or by arranging a first-rate seat with a propped-up saddle, we partook of the various viands, prominent among which were cold chicken and dainty ham sandwiches, most artistically tempered by exquisite claret and sparkling champagne. Commend us, indeed, to a rural feast with the fox-hunters, particularly if we desire a reminiscence from which to date common events of passing life. ■

From "About the Fox and Fox-Hunters," which appeared in the November 1861 issue of Harper's Magazine. The complete essay—along with the magazine's entire 165-year archive—is available online at harpers.org/fromthearchive.

MAD MAD

Underground com

By Jonath

On a humid Cairo evening, in fall 2014, a hundred comics lovers wearing sneakers and graphic T-shirts smoked cigarettes outside Factory Space, a popular venue operated by one of the city's few contemporary art galleries. When a blue hatchback pulled up at the entrance, they instantly recognized one of the passengers: Mohamed Andeel, a twenty-nine-year-old cartoonist and satirist whose status updates on Facebook reach 60,000 mostly left-leaning Egyptian millennials. The crowd was there to celebrate the release of the twelfth issue of *Tok Tok*, a zine that Andeel founded with four other graphic artists. The zine's first issue appeared in 2011, two weeks before the popular uprising against President Hosni Mubarak began, and launched a politicized comix movement in Egypt, much as *Mad* and *Zap* did in the United States a half-century ago. After joking with the crowd, Andeel mounted the stage and began clicking through a slideshow of his greatest hits. One depicts Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, Egypt's president, at his desk, blithely contemplating his country's position in the world. An assistant appears: "Sir! Sir! What are we going to do with the trash, the traffic, electricity, hospitals, security, wages, judiciary, and the future? What will we do with all the ignorance?!" The president replies, "Increase ignorance." For the new cover of *Tok Tok*, Andeel had drawn a millennial and a traditionally dressed older man in conversation, seemingly bridging an ideological gap—rare in Egypt these days, where thousands have been imprisoned for alleged affiliations with the banned Muslim Brotherhood or with secular opposition movements.

Egyptian political cartoons date back to the 1880s, and Arabic-language versions of *Mickey* and *Superman* have been popular since the mid-twentieth century. The first Egyptian graphic novel for adults, however, was published only in the past decade. The authorities, upset by the book's nudity, obscenity, and anti-regime attitude, raided the publisher. The incident galvanized a generation of young artists, many of whom are now creating subversive comics that stand in contrast to the sloppy and tired work of state-aligned cartoonists at the national newspapers. Andeel lampoons the government incessantly, though he is proudest of gags that address social issues such as homophobia or the disenfranchisement of the poor. "I don't want my work to be only interesting because of dictatorship, because this is again giving dictatorship so much size and importance," he told me. He brushed off the risks of insulting the president, which is prohibited by the country's penal code, and said he preferred to draw attention to his artistic style—simple outlines filled in with the appealing color palette of Matt Groening and offset by vulgar slang. "My work looks nice and cute," he said, "but talks about things that are dark and terrible."

Andeel published his first cartoons in high school, then worked for an opposition weekly that printed some of the earliest biting caricatures of Mubarak. During 2010, he drew daily cartoons for *Al-Masry Al-Youm*, a popular independent paper, in which he lambasted the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces, the interim government that ruled Egypt after the 2011 revolution. When the Muslim Brotherhood came to power, with the 2012 election of Mohamed Morsi, Andeel didn't break stride. In his cartoons, President Morsi contemplates a city in flames ("I feel that there is something wrong"), accosts a citizen ("Love me already!"), and reaches his arms out to seize a miniature Cairo skyline ("It's all mine"). After Morsi was overthrown by the Egyptian military, a year later, Andeel turned his pen on the generals. Amid a violent clampdown on dissent, he continued to crack jokes about the authorities' impunity. Two days after Morsi's ouster, Andeel published on Facebook a cartoon in which a military officer points his gun at a bearded man wielding a stick. "I am killing him because he is a terrorist," says the officer. The bearded man replies, "I am a terrorist because he is killing me." By early 2014, Andeel had left *Al-Masry Al-Youm* to join the writing team of *The Program*, a faux-news comedy show hosted by Bassem Youssef, who is often called "Egypt's Jon Stewart." But the television network pressured Youssef to tone down his jokes, and he eventually canceled the show in June 2014, shortly after the presidential election.



GAZINES

ics come to Egypt
an Guyer



On Cairo newsstands, cartoons that mock Sisi remain scarce. Andeel now regularly contributes to the Web news outlet *Mada Masr*, the only local platform that is willing to print his most polemical work. In November, it published a cartoon he drew of a giant Sisi standing on the back of a minuscule everyman; the big-eyed president proclaims, “Endure for Egypt.” After Andeel took his antimilitary barbs online, his audience grew rapidly. (*Mada Masr*’s website uses captions to translate the comics into English so that the works can reach a global readership.) But his surge in popularity was quickly followed by intimidating messages from Islamists and, not surprisingly, supporters of the regime. Vitriol on Andeel’s Facebook wall suggests that trolls are combing through his old posts and uncovering personal information. The Egyptian Interior Ministry has started to monitor online conversations; in November, military intelligence detained his colleague Hossam Bahgat, an investigative reporter at *Mada Masr*. Why hadn’t state security knocked on Andeel’s door? “They are too lazy, and it’s too hot,” he said with a laugh. In truth, Andeel may be lucky that the authorities put more effort into curbing broadcast media that reaches millions than online news that reaches thousands. “There are things you can say on the Internet that you can’t say on a TV show,” Andeel said. He likened satire in Egypt to a chess game. “You’re attacking here. You’re defending here. You’re moving up.”

The biggest challenge facing young comic artists in Egypt right now is not suppression or intimidation but economic stability. To make a living, Andeel writes television and movie scripts—he’s currently working on a zombie-comedy flick. *Tok Tok*, which is at work on its fourteenth issue, also faces an uncertain future—its funding, which was provided by the European Union, ran out at the end of 2015. The cartoonists have been drafting business plans, an endeavor that doesn’t attract the same international media attention as their art. “We all have lives and wish our lives wouldn’t be threatened by poverty or the possibility of failure,” Andeel said. “I hate when people see cartoonists as exotic—the expression of freedom fighters in the Middle East.” Yet freedoms continue to contract, and in December state authorities shuttered the Factory Space and its adjoining gallery. At the Factory Space in 2014, I sat in the front row beside Andeel’s mother as he projected one of his works for *Al-Masry Al-Youm* onto the wall. The cartoon was from September 2013, the height of Egypt’s pro-military furor. Egypt is often depicted as a dignified Cleopatra, but Andeel had drawn a giant woman wearing a long black galabia who was reclining on the Cairo skyline. A man gazing up at her says, “O Egypt, arise and prepare yourself,” a nationalist slogan taken from a popular song. Mother Egypt replies, “Enough, asshole.” *Al-Masry Al-Youm* printed Mother Egypt’s retort as “Shut up already.” *Mada Masr*, which put the cartoon on T-shirts, was less strict: it only blurred the word “asshole.” ■

Jonathan Guyer is a fellow with the Institute of Current World Affairs and a contributing editor of *The Cairo Review of Global Affairs*.

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THE DRUMS OF MARRAKESH

By Mark McMorris
Introduction by Ben Lerner

A Jamaican-born poet chain-smokes as he listens to a circle of drummers in the old market of Marrakesh, circa 2015. The drums sound in the present, but they also sound in the sense of measuring—they sound historical depths: an eleventh-century Berber dynasty “broke musical/devices and put a stop to dancing”; the dynasty also founded an empire, with Marrakesh as its capital, that spread over the Maghreb and al-Andalus, an empire that was in turn broken by the Catholic kings, whose descendants would lead the bloody conquest of the Americas, initiating the trade of goods and bodies-as-goods that would ship Africans to, among other places, Jamaica. Thus the second section of “The Drums of Marrakesh” finds the poet in his native Kingston, asking a drunk drayman “where did he think the sounds/arose from that he heard/in his mouth and the streets/in the bars and rum bottles/and Toots rattling the jukebox.” Because this poet, Mark McMorris, hears with exceptional clarity the way a sound sounds the past, how a drum circle encompasses more than one epoch or nation. His poems trace the complex circuitry of song and slavery. They capture the undertones, make us feel the undertow, of imperial histories: “The empire was temporary/dynasties rose and fell//in mimicry of the sea.”

“Rising rhythm” and “falling rhythm” are technical terms of poetic measure, and McMorris’s poetry rises and falls in mimicry of that mimicry: his own carefully tuned, timed, and broken lines link up the present tense of our reading with a variety of pasts. Many of McMorris’s keywords describe historical and poetic ruptures simultaneously: “broke musical/devices” breaks the musical phrase across the margin; when he says that “dynas-

ties rose and fell,” “fell” falls at the end of the line; and so on. In poetry, form is always a form of content: the structure of McMorris’s lines enacts the motions they describe.

The word “fall” appears throughout McMorris’s work, particularly in his most recent book, *Entrepôt*, which was published in 2010: “Everything falls, to pieces, to the victor, to someone’s lot/falls like a girl falls or a blossom, falls head over heels/like a city or water and like darkness falls, a dynast/a government can fall, or an apple, a cadence, the side of a hill.” *Entrepôt* was the first book of a trilogy. This month, Wesleyan University Press will publish the second and third books in a single volume called *The Book of Landings*. “The Drums of Marrakesh” is an important poem from *City of Palimpsests*, the final part of the trilogy, and it calls back across the sequence to the first: “The drums were an echo in air/of savors from an entrepôt.” An entrepôt is a port or city or clearinghouse established for trade, where people and goods collide, recombine, and are dispersed. It is a transnational no-place, a node in a network. McMorris’s poems resemble an entrepôt: polyglot, startling in their juxtapositions, alive to crossings of sound and sense. Perhaps McMorris wants us to understand poetry as a meeting place that is both inseparable from and other to these actual sites of violent exchange. Between writer and reader, a different kind of transaction is possible, even if what’s communicated is often a cry: “Whatever else disappears/the feeling of a sound/secretly or openly like a vowel/survives the ocean.” A poem—an instrument made out of breaks—bears witness to the futility of breaking instruments. As the poem below both says and shows: “The music is unstoppable.”

—Ben Lerner

1. (History)

From Senegal to Barcelona
the distance is that of a polity
an empire founded by Sanhaja
Almoravids of hostile love
nomads who broke musical
devices and put a stop to dancing
who before the New World
faltered under the papal cross
divested things of this world
of the sounds and imaginings
pledged to make the mountains
a home for men soon to perish.
The empire stopped at the River
Ebro and the horses turned back
to seek Madrid and Valencia
on routes laid down to weld
the continents and conquests.

In time *Los Reyes Católicos* broke
the fellowship of scholars
in Andalucía, the lyric
and Hebrew and Arabic poets
passed to exile in the south
to places like Tamnougalt
annus mirabilis
1492
Año de Reconquista
the conquest of America begins.
These matters I knew about
entering the circle of drumming
hearing the prayerful chants
like Rastafari in exile
in Marrakesh the old medina
built in the eleventh century
demolished in the twelfth
from which the Sanhaja rode.

2. (Kingston)

Perchance I had the occasion
to interview an old drayman
one day in downtown Kingston
to press him about his notions
where did he think he was
where did he think the sounds
arose from that he heard
in his mouth and the streets
in the bars and rum bottles
and Toots rattling the jukebox
and he said out of the earth
and he gave me a huge grin
and kissed his teeth and took
off for the department stores
and so I went back to reading

stories about Atlantic migrations
of bottom-of-the-barrel men
from England and the fables
they planted as extra crops
in the sweet-potato gardens
of the old plantocracy
and no one lives there today

3. (Metaphor)

Whatever else disappears
the feeling of a sound
secretly or openly like a vowel
survives the ocean
the floating dungeons
imitate the caravans
the auction blocks
the negative image
of altar and pulpit
limned in cathedral light
copying the rhythms
of seaborne movement
a hand extends to hand
over blue-shifted space
through the language
we construct audible
surroundings like a market
where things come and go

4. (Marrakesh)

Every night, night after night
in pockets across the esplanade
of the Marrakesh medina
they set up a ring of benches
fetch out the darbuka and daf
and string the gunbri's lament
the music is unstoppable
in the circles of light the old
women and their daughters dance
a stately movement of the feet
hearing in those sounds something
of what I imagined the night
under stars resembled to people
wandering between two cities
you become like the featureless air
you lose track of your beginnings

5. (M'hamid)

The drums across the esplanade
were still loud in my memory, when

I stepped out of the bivouac's arch
to smoke yet another cigarette

the twilight had not yet appeared
soundless empty land

torchlight spread out in three
dimensions to inflate the skin

of the visible in which I stood
sounds waited over the dunes

all the while from the beginning
over hard-packed Sahel

along the limb of a triangle
the caravans were in passage

the camels kneeling and walking
like dunes or breathing or the sea

their riders hardly urging
forms darker than the darkness

through which the sky pours
fragments of visible desire

whatever of actors and their voices
the desert consumes and erases

the air keeps a catalogue I thought
signs that stir in the mind

of travelers partial to mimesis
the night air around me was still

the voice of the mobile drums
entered the Valley of the Drâa

people stood around to listen
the drums pushed their signals ahead

of the caravans bound for Zagora
on the vertical plane the empty

space was perforated by history
some of the stars were visible

perfectly aligned like nuggets
of white gold in a lake of tar

the drums were an echo in air
of savors from an entrepôt

carried upon the wind's pages
the future had left no marks



6. (Essaouira)

In the cold sea on the west
coast of northern Africa
I looked for the profile
of the continent to which
the slave ships went long ago.

*Where we can live
Live a good good life
And be free.*

Nothing except the sea
was ahead when I looked
as if there never had been
a land to get to to land on
only the edge of vision
to fall down and not even
an underground railroad
to light out for the free.

In the negative Paradise
men had to improvise
wearing crocus-bag pants
marooned in the hills.

The sea had no knowledge
of these matters occurring
but still I drew a hand-
ful of it on my forehead
out of respect for drums
I heard in the Marrakesh medina
the rhythms I imagined
went abroad in the ships
moving there and doubling
over the sea's unruly pages
across the hard-packed Sahel

Agadez to Zagora—
the caravan's archipelago
lamped by constellations
native to the south
(the desert's Croix du Sud)
on a three-month angle
there and looping around.

The sea moves and doesn't move.
Saltwater evaporates.
Eventually the sun dries
the forehead and the skin
holds no print of transit
like the sand you disturb
the road is forever missing.

7. (Tamnougalt)

In the ksour of Tamnougalt
a road branches to the Jewish
quarter, the other road bends
to Muslim houses and the mosque.
Much of the town is hidden.
The streets bore through tunnels
built to regulate the weather.
The air smells of dried mud.
The ksour is a habitable labyrinth
fortified by tamarisk wood
lit by the occasional air shaft.
Partitions are plentiful.
Any road leads to a carrefour
tongues meeting at a permeable
triangle inside the labyrinth.

Wandering like a translator
you see people kept hidden
from orchard-light in the palmeraie
where the air is not as cool
learning underground paths
learning exits and entrances

inside the regional market
reading by lamp the book
from Jerusalem and writing
pages into it of their passage
along the scrawling river
going back to a time of legend.

No matter the curse of setting forth
in transit through alien spaces
you carry the origin with you
to the destination and abode
you once saw rising from the bleary
surface like a mirage, a city
in form perverted by the forces
of countless unconnected things.

8. (History)

The multitudes mingled
in the train of armies

from Senegal to Marrakesh
from Sevilla to Córdoba

Andalucían kingdoms
drums were forbidden

the empire was temporary
dynasties rose and fell

in mimicry of the sea
which forgives no hubris

darbuka and daf
dominate the medina

in time for my arrival
and today I heard the drums

performances of the voyage
like a thing past remembering

9. (Method)

To read an alien sky begin
by learning the imitative
clouds above the battlements
cradling the cannon
they compose an alphabet
for exiles and a history
and their tongues are folded
over into scrolls that open
at night and beckon new stars
from their invisible houses
to festoon another departure.

KILLER BUNNY IN THE SKY

A drone war begins between vegans and hunters

By Jay Kirk

On the afternoon of October 19, 2013, James Rodgers took a stroll through Myles Standish State Forest, a swampy area of protected land that lies about five miles south of Plymouth, Massachusetts. It was a perfect day for a little ground recon. When Rodgers stopped to look at the topo map on his iPhone, the screen showed the concentric whorls, geographic cowlicks, elevation, and sink of the surrounding forest of mixed oak, red pine, spruce: a good range for the quadcopter.

What he was looking for was flight suitability. Whereas fixed wings need room for takeoff, quadcopters require thin ground cover for ease of negotiation. The higher elevation of this little hill, which he had designated Bravo One, was good for both. You could see the full glory of the park, with meadows, little ponds, and a view just over the tips of the trees. Transmission towers gleamed in the distance. Bravo

Jay Kirk's most recent article for Harper's Magazine, "Bartók's Monster," appeared in the October 2013 issue.



One had a few landing options, some decent camouflage for the operatives, and great ground-control opportunities for the drone pilot.

Rodgers also thought that the infrared on the fixed wing would work well here. "Crazy sight lines," he said. "A nice sweep." Good angle of attack. "Bravo One rocks."

Myles Standish, the patron saint of soldiers of fortune, probably would

have approved of drones. As a military adviser to the Pilgrims and, by extension, to Massasoit, the sachem of the Wampanoag tribe, who made the compassionate but ultimately disastrous choice not to exterminate the Pilgrims in the winter of 1620, Standish had employed spies as part of his successful campaign to drive off their mutual enemy, the Narragansett, a tribe with a penchant for spooky psyops, such as delivering a bundle of arrows gift-wrapped in snakeskin to the colony.

Four centuries later, in the forest named for Standish, the main thing that Rodgers and his drones would be looking

for, on behalf of People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals, was illegal behavior. "Illegal" could mean the use of crossbows (only legal for the physically disabled), drinking while hunting, laying bait, or wounding deer and then failing to track them down and put them out of their misery. Rodgers was not a hundred percent sure that last one was illegal, but he thought that it should be.

He stopped to take a picture of an empty pack of Marlboros. "Littering. Great. *That* is illegal." Every time he saw a shotgun shell on the ground, he stooped to contemplate its overwhelming cylindrical emptiness.

A helicopter hovered overhead. It was uncertain whether the helicopter belonged to a TV news station or, perhaps, the Plymouth County Correctional Facility, the nearby maximum-security prison. Either way, Rodgers had a feeling that it was observing his scrutiny. The prison—where a number of celebrity inmates were incarcerated, including Richard Reid, the shoe bomber, and Charles Taylor, the former president of Liberia—was just one more logistical complication Rodgers had to factor in before Monday morning. Prison officials had lately expressed anxiety about contraband being smuggled into facilities via drone drop.

There were other concerns, as well. A month earlier, a recreational R.C.-helicopter enthusiast had accidentally decapitated himself. Aerial photographs of the scene—undoubtedly taken from a real helicopter—showed two still objects in the grass, covered by clean white sheets. There was a larger, rectangular sheet and, about three feet away, a smaller square, like a dropped handkerchief, that presumably concealed the head. After Metacomet, the son of Massasoit, was hunted down by the colonists, they displayed his head, much less discreetly, on a pike in the town square of Plymouth. Around the turn of the eighteenth century somebody filched the rotted jawbone.

When Rodgers heard a gunshot, he stopped to listen with a devastated expression. The senseless killing of unsuspecting herbivores filled him with rage.

"Deer hunting is nothing more than cross-species bullying to the extreme," he said. If the deer "agreed" to go along with the sport for the entertainment of the hunter, then it might be different, but clearly this was not a consensual activity.

He couldn't wait to get "an eye in the sky" to put the killers on notice. At Dick's Sporting Goods, where Rodgers gathered intel on the best lo-



cal spots to hunt, a clerk told him that his dad had once gotten sucked down into a marsh full of snakes, in nearby Hockomock Swamp, so that might be something to keep in mind. That and the ticks are wicked evil. The clerk also told him stories of satanic worship, child sacrifice, haunted this and paranormal that. Rodgers was not especially concerned about the satanism, but he was worried about snakes and ticks. He loved animals, but everyone has their limit.

The sun emerged from behind a cloud. Copper needles on the path caught fire and the pines turned glossy.

Rodgers trudged through scrub oak and invasive bush clover in his vegan boots, his hunter-orange baseball cap, his polyester bowling shirt, and his wispy birch-blond beard. Every time he came to another item of litter, he stopped, pointed to the offending trash, and said, "See what I mean?" Or mumbled to himself, "The amount of beer cans..."

Rodgers had only been working with PETA for six months, but he'd rapidly educated himself to be the

best drone commander he could be. Two months earlier, he'd traveled from his home, on Vancouver Island, to Washington, D.C., for the Association for Unmanned Vehicle Systems International convention, the drone industry's foremost lollapalooza. There he shopped elbow to elbow with NSA contractors and military brass in summer attire.

He was especially impressed by one vendor, Falcon Unmanned, which had used drones to accelerate rescue efforts for lost hikers by crowdsourcing shared video footage. Rodgers thought this strategy could enable animal-rights enthusiasts to collectively spy on hunters.

"The crowdsourcing element," Rodgers said, "is central to PETA's overall drones-for-animals vision." As word spread and more people acquired drones, he hoped, more "hunter-watching" hobby groups would get out there and uplink footage, which would allow others to go online to analyze the data for actionable intelligence.

Rodgers earned his PETA nickname, Man of Action, thanks to the

unusual curriculum vitae he sent to the organization. Not that the C.V. itself was particularly action-packed: hemp store, co-op bakery, nonprofit miscellany, etc. The nickname had to do with the physical résumé: knowing he'd have to do something pretty extraordinary to get PETA's attention, given their fairly high bar for wow, Rodgers used a 3-D printer to manufacture a six-inch thermoplastic action figure in his likeness, complete with a blue puffy vest. He packaged the doll in a PVC bubble with his C.V. and PETA'S NEXT MAN OF ACTION FOR ANIMALS! printed on the back, and had it delivered to PETA's Oakland office.

The doll went to the L.A. office, then on to PETA's headquarters, in Norfolk, Virginia, where Ingrid Newkirk herself played with it before it was sent back to the L.A. office. There, Tracy Reiman, PETA's executive vice president, called Rodgers in for a meeting.

As his recon mission in Myles Standish was wrapping up, Rodgers came face-to-face with a trio of pheasant hunters and their dog. He greeted the enemy warmly, en passant. The dog, outfitted with an electronic collar, emitted a warm bleep.

"Hello."

"Good afternoon."

After they passed, however, a ghastly look crossed Rodgers's face. "The lives of these dogs! There's tons of stories of dogs getting shot by the hunters, or the dogs are lost, some just abandoned. Just horrible, horrible stories. Then, of course, there's the kids. We'll see kids today, I bet."

He mentioned that Daisy now manufactured a pink BB gun for girls. "Taking your kids out? It's just bizarre."

He giggled as he recounted a news story that he'd recently heard. Unbelievable, really. A father and son had both been shot on the same day while out hunting. "Looo-sers," Rodgers said, with a singsongy lilt. "I think that is actually the definition, if you look it up, of a loser." To be clear, the father and son did not shoot each other. Nor were they hunting together. The two men merely had the extreme and coincidental bad luck to be shot on the same day. For Rodgers, however, there was something more than alea-

tory misfortune going on. He saw a kind of self-inflicted Darwinian punishment in the correlation.

Back in the parking area, he studied a bent Division of Fisheries and Wildlife sign as if it might be encrypted. He frowned until he finally deciphered the regulations. Then he saw a pickup parked by the gate with a bumper sticker in the cab window: GUT DEER?

"People are monsters," he muttered.

"Bridgewater Triangle?" The hunter's meaty hands were pushed deep into the pockets of his camouflage pants. "That's where you are right now!"

Rodgers, teeth chattering, was not ready to give a straight answer to what he and his shadowy companions were doing there at five-thirty in the morning, two days after the recon mission, in a minivan crammed to bursting with some very occult-looking electronics. He tried to redirect the hunter's curiosity by asking about local urban legends, in particular about some paranormal geometry in the area known as the Bridgewater Triangle.

By contrast with the jet-lagged drone operatives, the hunter was a restless, imposing force. He launched right into the story: the mysterious disappearances, a seventy-car freight train that vanished into thin air, strange lights in the sky, an apparition known as the Redheaded Hitchhiker. "There's been sightings of Birdman and the whole nine yards."

When Rodgers snickered, the hunter said, "You've got your phone. Google it. Type in, 'The Hockomock Swamp, Bridgewater Triangle.' It's been documented by all kinds of scientific people. There's all kinds of weird shit out there."

"Birdman?" Rodgers said.

"Body of a bird with the head of a man," the man said. "That was seen back in the early Eighties by my friend Joe. As a matter of fact, Joe quit the force and opened a gun shop over in Brockton. You can go in and talk to him about it. He's got photos and everything." He jerked a thumb to his left. "Over here is the burial ground of the Gypsy Queen. You'll see all kinds of makeshift graves in the woods."

The man said that the Gypsy Queen and her people had settled here shortly after King Philip. "You know who King Philip was, right? He was the son, or nephew, of Massasoit, or whatever, and he came out here, and they lived out here."

But no, Rodgers had never heard of King Philip, another name for Metacomb, who fled here before his grisly, headless end.

The man saw another bow hunter arrive and walk into the woods. He said that they weren't supposed to hunt before sunrise. Rodgers took note of the potentially illegal behavior.

Two of the drone operators were out on the grass, setting up a Flash Gordon-looking ray-gun thing called an axial-mode helical antenna. The third operator, a Brit named James Phipps, sat in the back seat of the minivan and worked busily to acquire satellite locations. The equipment emitted staticky clicks and chirps. Phipps's unshaven face looked tired in the blue-gray light of the laptop.

"There are caves out here with hieroglyphics," the hunter said. "All kinds of fucking weirdo shit. I don't go into these woods in the dark. I don't. You just saw that kid go. Good luck to him. I'll hang out in the fields, but I ain't going in the woods when it's dark. Salem ain't got nothing on this fucking place."

The hunter laughed when he learned that Rodgers was Canadian, and the other three were from South Africa, the United Kingdom, and the Netherlands. "You're a motley crew." He introduced himself. "My name's Twitch. They call me the mayor around these parts. You see anybody, you tell them you were talking to the mayor."

He looked at one of the foreigners, who was setting up a flat, square 2.4 GHz patch antenna on the minivan's roof in the moonlight. Twitch's hemi sat alongside a few other pickups there, their occupants visible by the intermittent glow of cigarettes.

Phipps spoke quietly to Lucian Banitz, an Afrikaner from Bethlehem, South Africa. "Will you do me a favor, mate? In my red bag, in the back bottom camera part, there's batteries and my goggles."

The third man, Laurens de Groot, from Rotterdam, opened the minivan's hood and used the battery to charge several devices.

"Charlie will be out here today cutting," Twitch said. He nodded at a tractor in the dark field. "If you're here while he's cutting, you'll see deer, fucking birds, 'cause they're out in the corn and they'll come flying across. You'll see anything from grackles to woodcocks to pheasants. There'll be deer, 'cause that's beautiful insulation for the cold nights. There'll be ducks. You guys film ducks?"

Rodgers looked at Twitch in the dark. Was this man trying to be helpful, or was he only digging for intel?

Twitch sniffed. An awkward moment passed in the cold dark. He pulled out a pack of cigarettes and lit one, illuminating a grizzled chin. "What, you guys all meet on the Net or something?"

"Yeah, pretty much," Rodgers said.

"Really? Is this your first day of ... wildlife watching?"

"Nope." Like a kid, Rodgers bounced in place to keep warm. "Nope."

"Now, how'd you find out about this place?"

"Umm. That's a good question." Rodgers fidgeted and hemmed. "Just online research. You know, looking for places that are both good for, where there's going to be, you know, deer and also where, for the plane there, you know, this kind of ... space."

Twitch seemed unconvinced. Or maybe he was just a tad nervous after glancing at the small ground station that had spread out like a church picnic around the minivan.

Something began to crackle and beep. A conversation about narrowing a "target radius" could be heard.

Rodgers asked Twitch whether he had deer stands set up in the woods.

"Yeah. I've got tree stands set up down there," Twitch said. "As a matter of fact, if you guys feel like taking a walk, in the light, say, about eight o'clock, there's a path, and it'll take you to a back cornfield, and you go to the right, you'll come to another field, and at about nine o'clock there'll be three does and a buck that cross the road. They do it every fucking day. I got my stands out there. They're easy pickings. So I'm gonna

take one of those, smoke it, and put it in the freezer."

Long awkward silence wherein Rodgers said, "Mm."

"You ever eat deer meat?"

"No."

"Really? What's the matter with you? Don't you live in Canada? Don't you have deer?" Twitch fiddled in his breast pocket.

The ailerons of the fixed wing wagged and whirled as Banitz and de Groot discussed something in the clandestine tongue of Dutch.

"We do have deer." Rodgers's voice sounded constricted. "Free roaming."

Twitch pulled a baggie from his pocket and put it under Rodgers's nose. "Take a sniff." The vegan recoiled. It was homemade venison jerky.

Twitch said it was a six-pointer he had killed right here last year. He put a plug in his cheek and said he carried the jerky to "torment the fuckers."

That's when the drone lifted off. It rose silently into the dark, a lit cross describing intersecting trapezoids around the perimeter of the cornfield. It turned with robotic grace as it hit its programmed waypoints.

Everyone below stared. Twitch's attention now seized, he looked over Phipps's shoulder at the screen, on which a red rectangle with plotted numbers corresponded to the grooved pattern of the silent drone above.

"This is footage coming in from the live feed," de Groot said. He was polite as Twitch leaned over another screen to inspect the grainy black-and-white thermal footage. It looked like the shaky landscape of an animal's innards as viewed by laparoscope, perhaps, or surveillance images of a fetus. That, or leaked video from the Department of Defense.

"In the wooded area here, the infrared actually penetrates the foliage," Phipps said.

Out of Twitch's hearing, Rodgers said that the infrared was like having "animal-rights Superman X-ray vision."

"So are you guys independent?" Twitch asked.

"No," Rodgers said. "No.... We're just like, sort of, hobbyists."

"What, is that on autopilot now?" Twitch asked.

Beep *bip bip bip* beep.

"That's the telemetry," Phipps said.

"There's the Birdman."

"It very well could be," Twitch said.

Next came a bird's-eye view of the parking lot, with halos around the trucks' headlights. Then the drone veered east, over the marsh, and a gleaming white snake came into view. This was the river, which now turned on the screen, rotated, gyrated, rattled, and spirit danced.

"Wait a minute, now, this is gonna show heat?" You could see Twitch's own internal target radius repatterning. "It'll show up, what, yellow?"

"Bright white," Phipps said.

After a minute, a smaller, vertical spot appeared.

"That's a deer," Twitch said, agitated. "That's a deer right there, buddy."

More spots crept out of the dark graphite woods. A herd of sulfur-white blips moved gingerly across the screen.

"Cra-zee," Rodgers said.

"And that's just in really thick vegetation," Banitz said. "And we're seeing them clearly. Clear as day."

"Shit. I gotta get one of these for fucking hunting." Twitch's cigarette glowed in his palm. "What's that? That's white—right there. Water hole, maybe?"

"Yeah, you'll find that you get rocks and things that look like deer," Phipps said. "Basically—obviously—the rocks store heat during the day and they give a false positive reading."

"Right," Twitch said. "But if you see it move ... *you know*."

"It's bright white there. There's somebody down there," Phipps said. "That looks slightly human."

"That's deer! See them moving?" Twitch was quite exercised. "That's deer! Holy shit! I know where that is!"

Rodgers, jocular: "Don't do it, Twitch, don't do it!"

"Go out and blast 'em." The hunter was all but greedily rubbing his palms.

De Groot noted that the bow hunters appeared to be concentrated mostly on the other side of the treeline, near the swamp. "That's where they are."

Banitz pointed to one moving blip. "He's gone that way."

Suddenly, Twitch was gone. A truck engine rumbled. Was he going to use the drone recon to find and

shoot a deer? How weird it would be to see him on the screen, cutting open the belly of a buck and wagging his middle finger back up at PETA's spies.

All eyes turned to the speck in the sky. A minute ago the quadcopter was on the ground. But then, with a noise like a nest of wasps doused with rum, it was 400 feet overhead. The only person not looking up was Phipps, who stood like a blind sleepwalker in knee-high muck boots. He had a chunky Futaba R.C. controller in hand and thumbed the gimbal sticks while crouched over. On his head were Zeiss cinemizer 3-D goggles—indeed, he was looking in the opposite direction from the quadcopter he piloted. It was still gray at ground level: 7:01 A.M. But the screen mounted to the heliaxial tripod showed the drone's POV as it pulled even with the bluffs of the cloudscape—the altitude indicator registered 242 meters. On the screen you could see the sun cracking over a tilted horizon, and then the drone suddenly dived back toward the earth.

Birds were starting to wake now—a giant oak that anchored the end of the cornfield was mobbed with blackbirds that filled the air with a shrill *scree scree scree*—and as the drone banked, the screen revealed a high-def shroud of sunlit mist rising off the forest.

"That is stunning," de Groot said.

De Groot was not only a drone activist but a veritable god in the pantheon of eco-warriors. Before founding ShadowView, a nonprofit that deploys drones to chase poachers in Africa, for which both Phipps and Banitz were U.A.V. pilots, de Groot was a member of the Sea Shepherd Conservation Society, an organization that makes Greenpeace look like a bunch of sedated kittens. De Groot became a star after Animal Planet started to document Sea Shepherd's fight against Japanese whalers for the reality show *Whale Wars*. (Commercial whaling was banned in international waters in 1986, but the Japanese have continued to hunt off Antarctica under the thinly disguised cover of scientific research.) He was nearly killed in

2010, when his ship, the *Ady Gil*, was rammed by a Japanese harpoon vessel (Season 3, Episode 6, "Sliced in Two"). His efforts brought much-needed attention to the cetaceans' plight. Sea Shepherd's founder, Paul Watson, often said that if an action wasn't filmed, it didn't happen. Showing viewers what it looked like when a grenade-tipped harpoon exploded in a minke whale, for example, helped build a groundswell of opposition that recently forced Japan to reduce by two thirds the number of whales it would hunt for such "research."

De Groot has unimpeachable cred as an activist. It's hard not to indulge in a little hero worship in his presence. And yet it's not entirely clear how one equates going up against global eco-criminals and the industrial-scale genocide of endangered species with today's mission in the cornfield. Saying such a thing, of course, is not equivalent to assigning relative value to different forms of life. There is no hierarchy when it comes to suffering. Indeed, one could be a puritanical weenie and taunt PETA by asking how it feels about conducting a joint operation with Lucian Banitz, who works with a company in South Africa that specializes in spraying crops with insecticides. There's a whole page on the PETA website devoted to peaceful alternatives to killing "uninvited guests"—not to mention a recent legal action taken by PETA against Backyard Brains, an educational company that sells a kit to let budding neuroscientists implant electrodes into the thorax of a cockroach to then pilot the bug (the "world's first commercially available cyborg") via a smartphone app called RoboRoach. The moralistic pause here is more to pose a question about the ethical use of spectacle. How much does a constant saturation of media stunts, which increasingly seem to draw more attention to PETA than to its right and righteous cause, hurt real action, which depends on mass media for its effectiveness? What happens when you cry wolf one too many times, and then when there's a real wolf caught in a real trap nobody bothers to tune in?

Turning Toward Home

REFLECTIONS ON THE FAMILY FROM HARPER'S MAGAZINE

Some of our most loving—and most difficult—relationships are with our parents, children, siblings, and extended families. These complicated relationships are the foundation of our society and our lives: they define our past, give us hope for the future, teach us to get along with others, and, often, provide excellent examples of how not to behave. The moving essays in *Turning Toward Home*, all of which were originally published in *Harper's Magazine*, gracefully explore these dynamics. Authors include David Mamet, Donna Tartt, Richard Ford, Sallie Tisdale, Louise Erdrich, and many more. Introduction by Verlyn Klinkenborg.

Order today through
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Published by Franklin Square Press

ISBN 1-879957-08-6

Softcover \$14.95

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Distributed through
Midpoint Trade Books

As the quad banked north, the altimeter read 150 meters. On the screen: rapid cuts over a band of forest, a blip of stuttered cornfield that yielded to blurs of meadow—milkwort, pokeweed, and buttonbush at 60 mph—and it went like that for a while, a rhythmic succession of stubble, treetops, and brunette meadows. Then, on the screen, the glint of pickups and a huddle of tiny figures in orange hats. As the drone closed in you could see the men looking up to the sky. Beeps accelerated like a heart-rate monitor as it zipped past the John Deere tractor. Then came the look of recognition on the men's faces: the gosh-faced animal-rights activist, the man in goggles holding the black box, the grinning Dutchman. The shadow of the quad clipped the ground as it buzzed overhead like a weed whacker. Then it rolled, jukeed, and dashed back out around the perimeter of the field, like a cat flying over the treeline, heading toward the south forty and the giant oak mobbed with blackbirds.

As the drone closed the gap, the tree exploded in slow black specks. Catching sight of three orange blips in the brown meadow, SSW, the quad airbraked, circled, dropped, and hovered at the approximate eye level of a trio of shotgun-armed hunters. One of the men turned in surprise and saw the UFO.

Out of the stirring grass, something pounced into view.

"Hounds! Hounds!" A British voice shouted, but before the dogs could defend their masters from this warrantless intrusion, the quad pulled up and retreated, leaving behind the baffled Norman Rockwell tableau below.

At 8:08 A.M., shortly after the first gunshot of the day, there was a commotion in the parking lot. A Dodge Caravan pulled in, and out piled a gang of attractive women. They were dressed in matching blaze-orange cargo pants, orange caps, black high-heeled boots, and revealing sleeveless zipper vests, and generally acted like they owned the place from the minute they hit the ground.

The hunters gawked at this sudden apparition of sparkling cleavage on the brisk autumn morn with a look of

bewildered dread. Clearly, the women's arrival signaled that the day was about to take on a distinctly weird and unwelcome tenor. This sense was emphasized—as if it required emphasis—by the two professional photographers who had been hired by PETA to document every moment. There was one female photographer with a Nikon D4, dressed more appropriately for the weather, and a hipster with dreads, in a red-and-black-plaid hunter's flannel, possibly worn ironically, who was armed with a Nikon D7000 rigged out for video. The hipster's name was Tommy Jay, and as he took in the glory of the day, he said, "Man, it's so beautiful out here, I'd love to smoke a spliff!"

The women in high heels all carried clipboards, and their orange foam trucker hats were embellished with blue-winged rabbits; the same little lagomorphic pegasi appeared on the backs of their black zipper vests with the words AIR ANGELS. To make the hubbub official, they slapped a few giant magnetized banners to the sides of the minivan:

PETA'S AIR ANGELS
PROTECTING WILDLIFE WITH DRONES

Rodgers told Lindsay Rajt, the woman who seemed to be in charge of this newly arrived agitprop division, that he had already discovered some potentially illegal activity, i.e., hunting before sunrise. Rajt responded with a knowing shake of the head, as if to say that was exactly the sort of hairy baloney she expected to find today. Rodgers reported that he'd taken the initiative and called the authorities, and Rajt said that was the right thing to do. Then, while the other women stood around shivering and looking a little lost, Rajt strutted back and forth and talked on her phone, evidently in communication with a missing angel who had become detached from the squadron on the way to the park.

Meanwhile the hunters went about their business, slowly, pulling gear from their pickup beds, talking quietly among themselves, and pretending not to notice or to care too much.

Tommy Jay, the photographer, ushered the angels to the edge of the

cornfield. They warmed up for the camera, mugging and moueing. Soon enough, the lost angel arrived and joined the others. The drone boys tittered as she strode by, and one said, "Watch out for the guns." Rodgers snickered, too, even though he would be sure to point out, within the hour, what a pig (with apologies to pigs) one hunter was for asking, "Why's everybody looking so sexy today?"

The two photographers flanked the angels like sheepdogs. "Hold on, hold on, hold on," Tommy Jay said. He arranged them around a forage harvester that smelled of manure for a few glamour shots.

Rajt broke away when she saw a hunter approaching. The angels swaggered out into the field like a team of vegan superheroes to confront this wary middle-aged man who was returning from the woods empty-handed.

A standoff ensued when the man realized he was cornered.

"Are you guys with an aviation magazine?"

"No, we're kind of in the aviation—uh—we're flying some drones today!" The semicircle of angels radiated telegenic indignation.

The hunter, who flinched at the rapid-fire clicks of the shutter, said that he had seen the drone go up that morning before the sun rose.

Several very excited angels said: "Oh, you did?"

He shifted the rifle on his shoulder and looked almost apologetic. "I wouldn't fly them too close to the highway, though. People might think they're ..." He trailed off, clearly discomfited by the paparazzi act.

"Yeah," Rajt said.

"They're very quiet," the hunter said. "Is it electric?"

"Mmm-hmm," one of the angels said.

"It's a beautiful day out today," Rajt said.

"Yeah." The hunter cast an eye to the woods.

The shivering angels lingered behind Rajt. Each clutched a clipboard to her plunging neckline and waited for the showdown to begin.

In the background one could hear the buzz of the quadcopter swooping around.

Rajt asked: "So do you come out to this site very often? Are you familiar with it? We heard it's haunted."

The hunter raised his eyebrows.

"We've been told stories from people in the area who, uh, think the woods out here are haunted."

The angels nodded.

"Oh," the man said. "The swamp?" He adjusted the gun on his shoulder. "The Indians used to think it was haunted."

"Oh, is *that* the source of the rumor?" The man was taken aback by Rajt's snappish tone. She regarded him as if he'd just personally maligned the headless soul of Metacomet.

Another angel took a stab. "You ever see anything strange out there?"

"In the mist? In the river?" There was a lot of goose-bumped, ethical flesh facing off against the hunter. "The mist that runs through looks kind of interesting... But I don't believe in ghosts."

"What are you hunting today?"

"Wild turkey. Until the pheasant moved by. But I came for turkeys."

"Did you hit anything?"

"No," the man said. "Not today. It's open for two weeks." He looked at the angels, and, warming somewhat to the situation, said in a less uptight voice, "So what's your mission here today?"

"Well, we've got the drones out and about and they're watching for any—we're watching wildlife. *You know*. And if we happen to see anything illegal, we'll report it."

"Illegal?"

"Yeah." Shifting back into interrogation mode, Rajt asked: "So what got you started doing this?"

The man looked at the angels as if he might be starting to feel a little sorry for them.

"Um. My dad got me into hunting."

"So when you were a kid, kinda, he took you out?"

"Sixteen years old, yeah."

"Mmm-hmm," Rajt said. "Yeah."

"Yup. Keeps me out of trouble."

Rajt adjusted her zipper. "Any chance we could persuade you to shoot with a camera instead of a gun today?" She laughed as the photographer Uzi-ed the man with her Nikon D4, and gestured toward the ugly corn stubble that surrounded us.

"You still get to enjoy the beautiful outdoors, see the animals."

"Yup," the man said.

"Yeah."

The man looked like he was waiting, almost as though he were inviting a more compelling reason to stay, but then, in a cheerful tone, he said, "I'm gonna go up in the field. If I catch a turkey, and you guys are here, I'll bring him back."

"Oh, please do!" Rajt's delight at the thought sounded genuine. "I'd like to see it!"

"Enjoy yourselves," the hunter said.

"Thank you!"

After the man walked off, Tommy Jay continued to prance around the angels, documenting the authenticity as this moment sunk in: their first encounter with Man the Hunter.

Rajt talked to one of the angels about release forms, which they evidently forgot to ask the turkey hunter to sign.

"I mean, I went to school with a lot of hunters," the youngest angel said in semi-amazement, "but I haven't ever been in a *field*."

They watched the drone fly for a while, cheering and visoring their eyes with their pale white hands until the quad came to a quivery landing. As Phipps removed his goggles, his hands were visibly trembling. He quakes, he said, because the experience is so overwhelming.

"With the goggles you're completely immersed in the system," he said. "You're in the system."

Rodgers choreographed the operators and angels around the minivan's tailgate, trying different arrangements of girl-boy-girl, boy-girl-drone, boy holding drone, and girl petting drone while boy bragged that this machine he'd built was pure, bare-bones, and raw. "It's function. Pure function," Phipps said. "Nothing more, nothing less."

He diddled an airfoil with his thumb and forefinger. The blades were carbon fiber: the same material as the shafts of the fearfully named arrows of the enemy: Mayhem, Predator II, Nightfall, Mutiny Slasher, Bone Collector Jr.

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THE SIXTIES: RECOLLECTIONS OF THE DECADE FROM HARPER'S MAGAZINE Introduction by Eugene J. McCarthy

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world," Phipps said, then blew a spider off the GPS screen. "Excuse me, little spider."

The angels cooed.

A PETA-branded hobby drone, also called Air Angel and available at that time for \$324.99 online, was brought out to be photographed. Rodgers called it the Sky Bunny. Phipps held it, but he looked slightly embarrassed to have to handle it.

Rodgers, whose responsibilities seemed to have shifted from special ops to photo ops, snapped his fingers and let loose a two-burst dog whistle when he spied a new target. "Angels! Angels!" He pointed at an approaching hunter. "We've got more people coming this way. More hunters!"

Rajt moved to intercept a heavyset man dressed more or less like a Navy SEAL, in full camo, compound bow in hand. He winced. "Is this like for a paper or something?"

"I'm with PETA. The animal-protection group? We've got our drones today that, basically—" She paused and adjusted her tone as if speaking to a kindergartner. "They're like these little helicopters and they go up in the air and they have cameras on them."

"Yeah." He knew what a drone was. He was an engineer for a company that designed routers for hospital operating rooms: hardware that communicated signals from a surgeon's endoscope, or any other mode of medico-surveillance, to remote specialists for virtual consultation. He fidgeted with the cam pulley on his bow.

"We're also taking footage," Rajt continued, "and if we see any illegal activity we can report it to the authorities as well."

"I see."

"So what do you think about this idea of the PETA drones out, up watching, like eyes in the sky?" Rajt cocked a hip.

"Uh. I think it's great. I mean, the more goofballs you get out of the woods the easier it is on the hunters, right?"

"The goofball hunters, you mean!" She laughed.

"If you want to stop illegal activity, that's awesome. I also don't want to shoot a deer only to find out he's al-

ready got three other holes in him and he's weak and he's dying. You want an animal that's had his run out there. He's had his shot. You know? The last thing I want is a guy out there who doesn't know what he's doing. That's what happens when, you'll see like an—oh, what are those big black birds? I remember seeing one recently in the newspaper. He had an arrow stuck in him."

Rajt was deeply grieved. "Oh Jesus."

The man's tone became more sympathetic and pastoral. "You're supposed to use a bladed tip, so it will kill them, but if you use your field tips, that arrow's just going to put a hole in them, chances are it's not going to kill the animal. So you need these blades."

He showed her one of the broadheads on his riser-mounted quiver. It had three razor edges and looked like the embryonic stage of a throwing star. "What a gun does is, it'll hurt the animal with trauma. So it'll bust up his organs inside as the bullet goes through. But the arrows ..." He looked at Rajt's stricken expression. "Oh, I'm sorry. You're—"

"Oh no." She shook it off like a seasoned martyr. "The gore is nothing new to me."

He looked at her. "So the arrows, they have blades that'll cut arteries and veins and bleed the animal out. So if you don't have that, you're not going to damage any veins, it's probably going to live. It may not live long, but he'll have plenty of strength to evade the hunter, and he'll suffer."

Rajt rallied enough to share a statistic that she had read: only 6 percent of Americans hunt. She believed this suggested that civilization had moved past the point that we need to kill in order to survive. The hunter retorted by asking, yeah, but what if things go dystopian? The way we're all pretty sure it's going to turn out, right? What if, he said, for any number of reasons, civilization is upended, whether that means the robots take over or whatever, and we're suddenly without the luxury of vegan health-food stores? "You're telling me six percent of the population is then going to survive? I find that horrible." Even in that nightmare scenario, he suggested, it was possible that we could still achieve the balance achieved by Native Americans. "They

hunted. They didn't overhunt. They were part of everything. And they had reverence."

Rajt said, "They were doing it in quite a lower-tech way than I think what we're seeing out in the fields today."

The hunter looked at his space-age bow and agreed.

"If you're here as a hunter," he said, "you're here to get food. And you have to be humane. We have to take the place of the predators right? There's not a lot of wolves anymore, not a lot of bears. The coyotes are starting to come back, but they're scarce. So if you're going to keep the animals from overpopulating you have to take that place."

"From what I've read, um, well, I'm from West Michigan," Rajt said. "So preface it with that."

He shrugged.

"And we have a big problem with deer. And I always heard growing up, people always said, 'Well, I hunt, we have an overpopulation problem.' The thing is, I've never met anybody who said, 'Yeah, we had a real problem with deer, but thankfully, three years ago we had a hunt and now the problem's solved.'"

The hunter nodded. "I know hunting alone can't replace all the predation that's gone," he says. "It's really just adding another hole in the bucket. Think of the habitat as a bucket, and the population of animals being poured into it are your growth, and then there's holes in the bucket. And the bucket goes up, and the bucket goes down. Some of the ways the bucket goes down is predation, and that's where the hunters come in."

She asked with a smirk why, if hunters were so concerned about the population issue, they didn't shoot more pregnant deer.

The hunter looked completely weirded out by the question.

"So when I look at a deer, for example, or I look at a wild turkey," she said, "I have this feeling of awe and kind of wonder. They're out there in nature and they're doing their thing, you know?"

The hunter nodded. "Sure."

"And I want to take their picture."

"Absolutely."

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SOLUTION TO THE FEBRUARY PUZZLE

NOTES FOR "KIDDIE LIT-TER":

The peripheral sentence is "Statistically speaking, six out of seven dwarves are not Happy."

The Library entries are POOH-BERTY, BAMBI-DEXTROUS, POTTER-FAMILIAS and BABAR-ISM.

Note: * indicates an anagram.

V	E	S	A	R	E	N	O	T	H	A	P	P	Y
R	A	I	L	B	E	A	O	H	E	L	I	O	S
A	C	T	U	A	L	I	Z	E	G	A	X	T	T
W	H	A	M	M	Y	L	E	M	E	R	I	T	A
D	D	B	A	B	A	R	I	S	M	M	E	E	T
N	E	L	L	I	E	U	N	T	O	S	A	R	I
E	C	U	B	D	R	B	O	U	N	T	Y	F	S
V	A	R	R	E	I	S	Z	D	Y	E	T	A	T
E	M	B	O	X	E	D	T	S	U	N	A	M	I
S	P	E	C	T	R	O	G	R	A	P	H	I	C
F	I	A	C	R	E	B	A	G	E	L	I	L	A
O	S	P	O	O	H	B	E	R	T	Y	A	I	L
T	A	E	L	U	S	I	L	O	N	A	S	A	L
U	O	X	I	S	G	N	I	K	A	E	P	S	Y

ACROSS: 12. two mngs.; 13. Bea(r); 14. he-soil(rev.); 16. *; 17. wh(a-mm)y; 18. *; 24. rev.; 25. N(el)lie*; 26. unto(ward); 27. hidden; 28. ecu(ador); 30. [c](b)ounty; 32. R-eisz*; 33. rev.; 34. emb(ox)ed; 36. t(rainees)-sunami*; 38. *; 41. fi(rev.)-acre; 45. Li'l-a; 47. (f)ail; 48. homophone; 49. *; 50. NASA-l.

DOWN: 1. *; 2. two mngs.; 3. hidden; 4. n-ail; 5. homophone; 6. them(e); 7. hidden; 8. a-la-r-Ms; 9. p([m]ix)ie; 19. Dec-A.M.-p; 20. blur-b(ook); 21. homophone; 22. first letters; 23. two mngs.; 29. bro-ccoli*; 31. *; 35. D.O.B.-bin; 37. a-hi; 39. leag[ue]*; 40. *; 42. Is-a-0; 43. ape-X; 44. last letters; 47. a-sp.

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"So what is it that makes you have kind of an opposite impulse and you want to kill them?"

"My impulse is not opposite at all. The beauty of nature is in the cycle of life and death. You have to find your place in that cycle. My view comes from looking at the bigger picture." He played the arrow against his thumb. "There are observers." Here he nodded, respectfully, at the circle of observers who stood in judgment of those who would step without apology into the arena of life and death. "And I think observers aren't going to understand unless they decide to take a place in there."

On entering the McDonald's parking lot in Middleboro, Rodgers recalled a bit of trivia about how the only thing Anthony Bourdain refuses to eat are Chicken McNuggets. He'll eat lightly grilled warthog rectum, Rodgers said, but McNuggets are just too wretched.

PETA was using the McDonald's as its final base of operations. They were here for the free Wi-Fi, so that they could cut and upload a one-minute video that they would release to the media within the hour. It would get 52,000 YouTube hits and more than 13,000 blog views, and be picked up by every news outlet from *Field & Stream* to Al Jazeera.

The location was practical, yes, and tastefully ironic, given that if anyone could be said to be PETA's archenemy it would be McDonald's. PETA runs a substantive and properly upsetting website called McCruelty, where you can learn about Unhappy Meals and check out the Twitter feed of Evil Ronald McDonald (@EvilRonMcD, location: "Rotting in your colon"): "I love to kill animals and turn them into really cheap and disgusting food that your kids love because I give them a toy that cost me \$.0001 to make."

The group needed a few action shots of the Sky Bunny doing something more gripping than sitting on an angel's lap for the media release, so they took the drone for another flight nearby. Rodgers took the controls, wobbling an iPhone to steer the blue-and-white drone, which bobbed and wove over a dirt pit.

"Go Sky Bunny!" he shouted.

Over the buzz of its plastic rotors, the jocular scoffs of the drone pilots could be heard: "Well, it flies, which is fantastic," de Groot said. "And it makes a real good toy, and if I was like six years old I would love it."

"Fifty percent of these are broken in the first two days," Phipps added. "The other fifty percent fly away. So, a hundred percent are lost. But for what they are, they're a great bit of technology."

As PETA itself is fond of saying—see, for example, its 2003 Holocaust on Your Plate ad campaign—there's no such thing as bad P.R.

While Rodgers waited in the minivan, he watched a pickup with the corpse of a deer lashed to the tailgate enter the drive-thru. Then, a few minutes later, another.

"Surreal," he said.

He chewed an energy bar and watched the drive-thru traffic inch forward. Unbelievably, a third truck with a blood-caked deer strapped to the back arrived. A pretty happy-looking dog rode shotgun.

After PETA's video of the Sky Bunny was released, hunters began to search for shielding technology to defy the drones. When PETA caught wind of this, they hinted at new secret programs and Kevlar-plated drones. A lot of hunters, however, seemed to think that getting their own drones wasn't such a bad idea, not only to conduct counterespionage but to track down prey, just as Metacomet's men had adopted the colonists' flintlocks to better chase off the white invaders. In the end, maybe all PETA had done was to give its enemies an idea, and a few years down the road, we'll see a full-blown unmanned aerial war over the sacred hunting grounds of America, where the deer and the pheasant are only collateral damage.

When pressed for details on future ops, Rodgers said that he couldn't give specifics, but he suggested that PETA was, indeed, engaged in secret tests: "Suffice to say we've been working with some contractors to explore urban applications." For now, though, it remains just another classified surveillance program. ■

UNDECEIVING THE WORLD

Can a staged photograph tell the truth?
By Stuart Franklin



Staging—the practice of deliberately arranging a scene—has coexisted with documentary photography from the beginning. When Louis-Jacques-Mandé Daguerre published a seminal tract on a method for fixing images onto a shiny piece of silver-coated copper, in 1839, he also described the relatively recent art of the diorama. Photography and staging, you might say, were launched into the world as twins.

Nineteenth-century portrait photographers readily took to fakery, often posing their subjects in

tableaux that were designed to evoke classical or religious motifs. From portraiture, staging spread to war photography. In the years leading up to the American Civil War, Mathew Brady rented ornate studios in New York and Washington to stage portraits. His associates, Timothy O'Sullivan and Alexander Gardner, were accustomed to posing Washington's *bon chic, bon genre* amid fringed and Gothic chairs, a Corinthian column, a gold clock whose hands rarely moved, and a leather-bound tome. When they went on to photograph the

Stuart Franklin is a photographer and the former president of Magnum Photos. His book The Documentary Impulse will be published next month by Phaidon.



aftermath of the Battle of Gettysburg, in July 1863, the pair saw little difference between moving a dead sharpshooter from his redoubt to a better setting nearby and posing a model in the studio. During the Spanish Civil War, seven decades later, Robert Capa probably had a Republican militiaman fake his own death for a photograph. These interventions did not diminish the ability of the images to communicate the gruesomeness of war, but no one pretends that's all there is to say on the matter.

One obvious danger is the ease with which the origins of a staged image, or an artist's intentions, can be forgotten over time. Consider Oscar Gustav Rejlander's portrait "Homeless" (circa 1860), which shows a boy in rags sitting on some

steps with his head bowed, and John Thomson's "The 'Crawlers'" (1877), which depicts a destitute woman in a crumpled dress. The photographs were both taken in London and are similar in mood, and if you did not know anything else about them you might never guess that while the latter wasn't, as far as we know, photographed indoors, the former was staged with a model in a studio. Time readily erases the difference.

The same elision happens even with photographs that are now widely known to have been staged. In 1936, Arthur Rothstein, a twenty-year-old photographer, visited Pennington County, South Dakota. Rothstein, who worked for Franklin Delano Roosevelt's Resettlement



Clockwise from top left: "The Home of a Rebel Sharpshooter, Gettysburg," 1863, by Alexander Gardner and Timothy O'Sullivan, courtesy Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division; "Death of a Loyalist Militiaman," 1936 © Robert Capa/International Center of Photography/Magnum Photos; "The 'Crawlers,'" 1877, by John Thomson, courtesy London School of Economics Library; "Homeless," circa 1860, by Oscar Gustav Rejlander, courtesy George Eastman Museum

Administration, was looking for a way to demonstrate the seriousness of the conditions that led to the Dust Bowl. While walking along a dried-up alkali flat, he found a bleached steer's skull. He moved it onto a patch of cracked mud, photographed it, and later used the skull as a prop in several other scenes. One of the resulting pictures, published in the *Washington Post*, among other places, met with much acclaim before Rothstein's staging was discovered. Political opponents of the New Deal used the opportunity to paint Roosevelt's efforts to ameliorate poverty as deceitful. Other photographers suffered similar controversies. Walker Evans has drawn posthumous scrutiny for adding an alarm clock to a

tic, to play to the nostalgia of servicemen returning from the fighting in Europe. Doisneau used actors to stage the photo essay, and while it's unclear whether he intended to hide what he had done to set up his scenes, the decision came back to bite him forty years later when two people who claimed to be the loving couple at the center of "Le baiser de l'Hôtel de Ville" sued, unsuccessfully, for a cut of the royalties.

In 1999, Werner Herzog, the film director, made his so-called Minnesota Declaration, in which he explicitly embraced staging:

There are deeper strata of truth in cinema, and there is such a thing as poetic, ecstatic truth. It is



tenant farmer's mantelpiece, whereas Edward Curtis took flak during his lifetime for removing alarm clocks, along with every other modern device, from his portraits of Native Americans.

In the years after World War II, *Life* magazine hired Robert Doisneau to photograph a story about lovers in Paris. The apparent aim was to portray the city as quaint and roman-

mysterious and elusive, and can be reached only through fabrication and imagination and stylization.

His view echoes that of John Ruskin, the nineteenth-century artist and critic, who defended J.M.W. Turner's impressionist paintings as representations of "moral truth" over "material truth." Since 1936 at least, documentary photographers have



struggled to find acceptance for ecstatic or moral truth. The public, meanwhile, has simply expected truth.

“To manipulate an image is to lie”: for Patrick Baz, a French photojournalist and a juror for the 2015 World Press Photo competition, the equation was clear enough. In an essay for *Le Nouvel Observateur* last year, Baz explained why a fifth of the photographs that had made it to the penultimate round of the contest were disqualified. He was talking not about staging but, of course, about Photoshop. Many of the offending images had been altered to remove inanimate objects, a miscellany that included a garden hose, cigarette butts, electrical wires, and skin imperfections. In other pictures, day had been turned into night, buildings had disappeared into thin air, and captions had presented inaccurate information. As further controversy emerged, the news-photography industry closed ranks in opposition to post-processing and manipulation of any sort.

But manipulation is almost a necessary adjunct to digital photography. Digital cameras record images using millions of sensors that are laid out like a Roman mosaic. To create the

appearance of a seamless whole, a camera must interpolate—i.e., guess—the missing information it needs from the surrounding pixels. The lower the camera’s resolution, the more interpolation is required to paint a digital photograph.

Two of the primary reference points for news photographers are the codes of ethics supplied by the Society of Professional Journalists and the International Federation of Journalists. The latter states clearly: “Respect for truth and for the right of the public to truth is the first duty of the journalist.” If that’s too vague, Santiago Lyon, the director of photography at the Associated Press, has a clearer standard: “The bright red line is the addition or subtraction of elements of a picture.” Four years ago, the Associated Press erased all the pictures of one contract photographer from its archives. The crime: removing a shadow—his own—from a sports picture.

Part of the problem is that “photojournalism” and “documentary” are often used interchangeably, when the former is really a subdiscipline of the latter. Much of contemporary documentary photography lies somewhere between journalism and art. Like

Herzog, I find the insistence on an objective truth a bit too literal. Couldn’t documentary photography concern itself with a different ideal than absolute fidelity, something akin to what Seamus Heaney called the act of “undeceiving the world”?

While the ethics that govern photojournalism differ from those applied to other forms of image-making, the ethics of deception are, I think, constant. Any form of undeclared and intentional falsifying of a photograph (or a painting, for that matter) is lying. But what does actual deception look like? Two well-known historical examples of manipulating photographs both involve the addition of smoke plumes. The first, Yevgeny Khaldei’s “Raising a Flag over the Reichstag,” depended on both staging and manipulation. The Soviet Army claimed the Reichstag, in Berlin, late at night on April 30, 1945, when it was too dark to take a picture. To remedy this difficulty, Khaldei staged a flag-raising two days later. In the darkroom, he added plumes of smoke, borrowed from a separate negative, for dramatic effect. Later, under official orders, he removed one of two wristwatches visible on the arm of a soldier in the photograph. (The authorities wanted to avoid the suggestion that the soldier might have been looting.) There were truths there—the time the Reichstag fell, the

Top: “Raising a Flag over the Reichstag,” 1945 © Yevgeny Khaldei/Corbis. Bottom: John Filo’s original photograph of the Kent State protest © John Filo/Getty Images (left), and the altered version as it appeared in the November 6, 1972, edition of *Time* (right)

state of Berlin, the evidence of possible looting—that Khaldei was obscuring.

The second example is the Lebanese photographer Adnan Hajj, a freelancer who worked for Reuters. In 2006, he doctored an image of Beirut, adding smoke to the skyline. After Hajj uploaded a second doctored image, which showed an Israeli F-16 fighter firing flares, Reuters removed every one of his pictures from its digital archive.

People's sensitivities have changed since the early 1970s, when a technician blithely removed a distracting fence post from an image that showed the killing of a student at Kent State University. Today, manipulation of news images is taken seriously, and appropriately so. As Maria Mann, the director of international relations at the European Pressphoto Agency, told me, "People are tired of being lied to." At the same time, she said, the volume of content being sent to news agencies, and the downsizing of editorial support for photographers, "works in the favor of those who want to deceive."

So where are we left when it comes to staging and manipulation? For documentary photography that is not photojournalism, the standards are a bit more progressive. They allow for works such as Jeff Wall's enigmatic staged photograph "Men waiting" (2006). Wall, who refers to his work as "near documentary," has been open about his method. To create "Men waiting," he cast unemployed Vancouver men, drove them to the location—a street corner in the eastern part of the city—and told them how to pose. That kind of transparency is what's needed for any documentary photography that involves staging.

The self-representation of motherhood is the subject of *Kinderwunsch*, a series that Ana Casas Broda published in a 2013 book. (*Kinderwunsch* means "desire to have children.") Casas Broda's photographs are intimate staged portraits in which she engages visually with the experience of losing ownership and control of her body at a time when her children's needs, at every turn, reigned supreme.



Top to bottom: "Videogame," 2009, by Ana Casas Broda, courtesy the artist; "Men waiting," 2006, by Jeff Wall, courtesy the artist and Marian Goodman Gallery, New York City; photograph at the Royal Naval College, Helder, The Netherlands © Paolo Verzzone/Agence VU



In the book, Casas Broda describes her staging as collaborative, a time for the family to connect: “We play, they come up with ideas. We put together a scenario and they do whatever they want.” In one revealing “half-staged” photograph from 2009, her seven-year-old son, Martín, sits in the foreground, at home in Mexico City, holding a PlayStation controller. Concentrating fully on a game of *Sonic Riders*, Martín seems to be oblivious of his mother, who lies naked and asleep on the couch behind him. In the photograph he appears unaware of the sacrifices she has made to bring him into the world.

As it happens, the World Press Photo rules already make an exception for staging, at least when it comes to portraiture. Last year, after Paolo Verzone won an award for his staged portraits from Europe’s military academies, he called his discipline “the last secret playground, because you are free from constraints.” One photograph shows a Spanish cadet posed in an auditorium; another, a cadet in front of some painted torpedoes. Both images formed part of the prize portfolio. “The staging is part of the accepted process,” Verzone said, “not only by the industry but because all the portraits in the history of mankind have been staged.” For Verzone, military cadets make perfect subjects: they don’t fidget and are used to being told where to stand. “It’s the

beauty of the portrait to be staged. There’s so much to invent in the photographic portrait.”

For a recent project about the centenary of World War I, Alex Majoli, an Italian photographer, re-created battle scenes in the Italian Alps with a cast of actors. To my eye, the photographs look more real than the few images of fighting above the snow line that survive in German and Italian archives. In Europe, the practice of staging continues to evolve, notably in the work of Marta Soul, Jill Quigley, and Alison Jackson.

What, then, of “truth”? Last year, I put that question to Oliva María Rubio, the artistic director of La Fábrica and an art historian trained at the Autonomous University of Madrid, who has studied the Robert Capa photograph and others like it. “The history of photography has already shown that photography can lie,” she said. “The idea that photography is the truth or the sole basis of reality has been surpassed. Reality is what we construct for ourselves.” If partitioned from factual reporting, documentary can become a means of taking us beyond the type of images or stories that we are accustomed to seeing. An alternative reality, perhaps, albeit one that seeks to undeceive our own.

“But where do the boundaries of documentary lie?” I asked.

She laughed. “I didn’t say there were any.” ■

EX POST

The life of a woman of letters

By Annie Dillard

Reading fan mail doesn't swell your head, though it often startles by extremes: "You are my friend, Annie Dillard, you are my true fucking friend." Of course you never hear from the many who didn't like what you wrote, unless their teacher makes them write you: "You have a great talent for focusing on detail, including the most tedious."

A historian ended his note, "I am sorry to invade your privacy. But you have invaded mine." Another letter concluded, "This is not a form letter. The only other person I have contacted for this thesis is Milton Berle."

Would I "guest star" on a Minnesota cable-TV show called *Wishin'-n-Fishin'*? The producer would pay for "all transportation throughout Minnesota," as well as lodging and food, "even bait."

"What's your favorite word? Mine is usually 'margin.'" A U.S. district

Annie Dillard's *The Abundance*, essays old and new, will be published this month by Ecco.



"Dillard is attracted to the verb." True.

I flinched when school boards forced children to read something I wrote. "What is your favorite animal? Is Annie your real name or your fake name? How many book's have you wrote?" Students in a high-school class got stuck illustrating my (poor and tiny) tropes in colored marker. They sent me these illustra-

tions, so here were, among many others, "a blacksnake caught in a kitchen drawer" and "a dog thin as death."

College students agree with children wholeheartedly that my books are not for them. "Quite a brain teaser." "Personally, I need more of a story line." "You might want to think about writing an easier version." "You threw out too many ideas." And, dazzlingly, "This book, Ms. Dillard, is an outstanding reference to life itself." (I read this sentence over and over.) So hundreds of blameless students grow up cursing my name.

From an undergraduate at Yale: "One thing I would really like is an interview. It would take up some space and look very good." Another college

judge in Connecticut wrote from his chambers to tell me the name of a good restaurant in Santa Monica. A man in Taiwan finished my pioneer novel, *The Living*: "I actually said aloud, 'Thank you,' startling my wife in bed beside me."

A reader sent me a check for a hundred dollars. A woman hand-stitched me a beautiful quilt. A man concluded his letter, "I wish you luck, and above that, I wish you timing."

A professor of philosophy in California sent me three photographs of "the world's largest hair ball," found in the belly of a dairy cow. A literary critic commented on a passage I wrote about the "heave shoulder" in Leviticus:

student wanted answers to specific questions “so that it will be easy for me to write my paper. I need to get an A or a B ... as soon as possible.... I will be forever thankful to you for helping me save my scholarship.”

To prevent curriculum designers from inflicting further cruelty on children, I tried to open a book with a sex scene. I couldn't write one. So I began books with pages that were hard to read. Foolishly I confessed this strategy to my agent, who winced.

The publisher called, excited. A school board in California had removed from a syllabus a bit I wrote about throwing snowballs at cars. (Lest those California schoolkids, many of whom were presumably huffing or injecting God knows what, get ideas.) He wanted me to issue a statement to the press. It was too silly; I just laughed. He insisted: other writers issued statements and got free publicity. I kept laughing, as the publisher, not for the first time, tore his hair.

Unintended consequences: an English professor in New York said his nineteen-year-old student “stopped by” to tell him that she had refused a proposal of marriage from her boyfriend “directly as a result” of reading an essay of mine that he had assigned. She “told her young man that she still had three years of a university education ahead of her and could not assent at this time, even though she loved him.” (Kid—I'm sorry!)

A professor called to invite me to speak and got steely as he reacted to my polite regrets. What was he going to do? He had to print announcements on deadline. I gave him the names of, and contact information for, about twenty entertaining writers. None was famous enough for him. He said, “We want a household name.” A grown man, he apparently believed the race was to the swift, just as some readers assume that the book of mine that won the biggest prize is the best book.

I checked my reality by every so often suggesting that an inviter try asking John Updike or Jonathan Lethem. The response never varied: “I wouldn't want to bother him!”

On the phone a university press offered me five thousand dollars for an

hour's congenial work. I had to decline because I didn't have an hour. The editor burst out, “Why can't I get a woman?”

“You're not so bad,” a journalist told me on the phone. Sir? “I heard you were impossible.” That is, I declined an offer, no matter how graciously. I could not get free of family obligations to speak at President Carter's inauguration either. They got James Dickey.

People die when you least expect it, when you are, say, flipping through the bills and flyers in the mail. Gene Kelly's widow wrote to say that, dying, he asked her to read aloud from my memoir, *An American Childhood*. (Gene Kelly was a fellow Pittsburgher.) A grief-crazed forest ranger said one picture of me reminded him of his late wife. She died of a brain tumor and left him their five kids.

Here in the mail came another report from the front lines. A photographer often traveled to Honduras to assist and translate for an eye doctor. There, a local boy lived with his mother, who made a poor living selling fireworks. Their hut caught fire and burnt the boy badly: upper body, face, and both eyes. Home in the United States, the doctor found an eye bank to donate one cornea. After he transplanted the cornea, he talked other surgeons into looking at the boy's burns. They released the tight scars of his old grafts and put him in a body cast that placed his bent arms high above his head. (The doctors called him Touch-down.) A photograph that came with the letter showed a burnt boy, his arms raised, his eyes huge and white with scar tissue, glassy, apparently unseeing, and gazing up.

A book club that had been discussing one of my books raised some questions for me. The first was: “Should this book be read between the lines or between the words?”

A letter from another book-club member specialized in juicy details. An aside in *An American Childhood* mentions that my father's ancestor started American Standard long ago. The letter said that, at a meeting to discuss that book, the hostess “showed us their toilets—since they were of American Standard vintage.” The hostess's husband belonged to “the Explorers Club in New York and has a rat named after him.”

“Marjorie couldn't understand how you got the Pulitzer Prize for this.... Next time I'll tell you how I happened to be in Cody, Wyoming, in 1948.”

She said she gave a talk about the book at hand. Since “only a handful” of the club's members had finished reading it, “I concentrated on you, your works, and your husbands.”

Nearly three decades ago, I took similar stock of my mail. In the years since, I found myself becoming a letter writer and an email writer instead of a book writer. Now I no longer answer strangers. I miss the people and welcome the time.

Here's one more, from the good old days. Under the heading *Miracles of Nature*—a private category of mine—a woman begins calmly enough: “One summer day, I was sitting in the parking lot of McDonald's, Flushing, New York, eating a quarter-pounder and enjoying the familiar scene, when I heard a strange scraping sound, barely audible, coming from the passenger seat occupied by a standard box of regular-size Kleenex. As I watched with appreciation, the available Kleenex began a slow descent into the box through its slit.” Copies to Al Gore, Jared Diamond, and Prince Charles. ■

March Index Sources

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GLORY

By Lesley Nneka Arimah

When Glory's parents christened her Glorybetogod Ngozi Akunyili, they did not foresee Facebook's "real name" policy, nor the weeks she would spend populating forms and submitting copies of her bills and driver's license and the certificate that documented her birth on September 9, 1986, a rainy Tuesday, at 6:45 P.M., after six hours of labor and six years of barrenness. Pinning on her every hope they had yet to realize, her parents imagined the type of life that well-situated Igbo imagined for their children. She would be a smart girl with the best schooling. She would attend church regularly and never stray from the Word (amen!). She would learn to cook like her grandmother, her father added, to which her mother countered, "Why not like her mother?" and Glorybetogod's father hemmed and hawed till his wife said maybe he should go and eat at his mother's house. But back to Glorybetogod, whom everyone called Glory except her grandfather, who called her "that girl" the first time he saw her.

"That girl has something rotten in her, her chi is not well."

Husband pulled wife out of the room to prevent a brawl ("I don't care how old that drunk is, I will fix his mouth

today") and begged his father to accept his firstborn grandchild. He didn't see, as the grandfather did, the caul of misfortune covering Glory's face, which would affect every decision she made, causing her to err on the side of wrong, time and time again. When Glory was five, she decided after much consideration to stick her finger into the maw of a sleeping dog. At seven, shortly after her family relocated to the United States, Glory thought it a good idea to walk home when her mother was five

minutes late picking her up from school, a decision that saw her lost and sobbing in a Piggly Wiggly parking lot before night fell. She did a lot of things out of spite, the source of which she couldn't identify—as if she'd been born resenting the world.

That's how, much to her parents' embarrassment, their Glory was nearing thirty, chronically single, and working at a call center in downtown Minneapolis. She fielded calls from disgruntled homeowners on the brink of foreclosure, reading from a script that was intricate and logical and written by people who had never before spoken on the phone to a human being. In all their calculations about her future, Glory's parents had never imagined that on April 16, 2013, at 5:17 P.M., Glory would receive another email refusing to restore her Facebook page. Nor could

they have conceived that Glory would be the sort of person for whom this misfortune would set rolling an avalanche of misery, which led her to contemplate taking her life.

She called her mother, hoping to be talked out of it, but got her voicemail and then a text saying, "What is it now?" (Glory knew better than to respond.) A call to her father would yield a cooler response, and so she spent her evening on the edge of her bed, neck itching like



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crazy, contemplating how a bottle of Moscato and thirty gel-filled sleeping pills would go together. The note she wrote read:

I was born under an unlucky star and my destiny has caught up with me. I'm sorry Mummy and Daddy that I didn't complete law school and become the person you'd hoped. But it was also your fault for putting so much pressure on me. Goodbye.

All of this was true, and not. She was unlucky, yes, but it was less Fate and more her terrible decision-making and laziness that saw her flunk out of college, along with her propensity for arguing with professors and storming out, never to return. She eventually graduated with a shameful G.P.A. Then came law school, to which she gained entrance through a favor of a friend of a friend of her father's, thinking that her argumentative tendencies could be put to good use. But she managed to screw that up too, choosing naps instead of class, happy hours instead of studying. She was unable to do right, no matter how small the choice. These foolish little decisions incremented into probation, then a polite request to leave, followed by an impolite request to leave after she staged a protest in the dean's office.

It was also true that her parents put pressure on her. Yet theirs was the sort of hopeful pressure that would have encouraged a better person.

Glory fell asleep after a glass and a half of wine and woke to find the pills a melted, bitter mass in her fist. In the morning light, her melodramatic note mortified her, and she tore it up and flushed it down the toilet. At work, avoiding the glare of her supervisor and the finger he pointed at the clock, she switched on her headphones to receive the first call: Mrs. Dumfries. Her husband had died and she had no clue where any paperwork was. Could Glory help her keep her house? Glory read from her script, avoiding the "no" she was never allowed to utter. Then there was Glen, who was actually Greg, who was also Peter, who called every day at least four or five times and tried

to trick the customer-service reps into promises they couldn't keep. Little did he know that even if Glory promised him his childhood home, complete with all the antiques that had gone missing after the foreclosure, she would only be fired and he would be stuck in the same two-bedroom apartment with his kids. All day the calls came in, and Glory had to say no without saying "no," and the linguistic acrobatics required to evade this simple answer wore away her nerves.

At lunch, she ate one of the burritos that came three for a dollar at the discount grocery store and a nice-looking



sandwich that belonged to one of her co-workers, and checked her email again. Even though her Facebook account hadn't yet been restored, she walked by the lobby of the advertising agency that dominated the top two floors of the building. Before she reached the glass doors, she paused by the wall to the right, on which the agency had mounted the logos of the companies it represented. She took a photo of herself in front of the logo of the jewelry mega-chain. When her Facebook page was restored, she would post the picture, with the caption: "Worked on my favorite account today. The best part is the free samples!"

Then her cousin in Port Harcourt would like her post, and another friend would confess her envy, and others still would say how (OMG!) she was *sooo* lucky. And for a moment, she would live the sort of life her parents imagined for her those many, many years ago.

After her lunch break, she sank back into her seat and was about to switch her headset on when he walked in. Glory knew he was Nigerian right away by his gait. And when he spoke, a friendly greeting as he shook her supervisor's hand, her guess was confirmed. He wore a suit, slightly ill fitting, but his shoulders made up for it. He joined a group of trainees across the room.

He had an air of competence that she found irritating, reading from the script as though he had memorized it and managing to make it sound compassionate and genuine. At one point, he noticed her staring, and every time she looked at him after that, he was looking at her, too.

She culled bits and pieces of him over the rest of the day, eavesdropped on impressed supervisors who sang his praises. He was getting an M.B.A. at the U. He had grown up in Nigeria but visited his uncle in Atlanta every summer. After his M.B.A., he was going to attend law school. His parents were both doctors.

Glory knew what he was doing, because she did it as well: sharing too many details of her life with these strangers, signaling why she didn't belong here earning \$13.50 an hour. She was something better than a "customer-service representative"—everyone should know that this title was only temporary. Except in his case, it was all true.

He smiled at her when she was leaving, a smile so sure of reciprocation that Glory wanted to flip him off. But the home training that lingered caused her to avert her eyes instead and hurry to catch the bus.

Her phone dinged. "Why did you call me, do you need money again?" A text from her mother. *No*, she wanted to respond, *I'm doing fine*, but she didn't. After a week, her mother might send \$500 and say this was the last time and she'd better not tell her father. Glory would use the money to complete her rent or buy new shoes, or squirrel it away to be nibbled bit by bit—candy here, takeout there—till it disappeared.

Then, when her mother couldn't restrain herself anymore, Glory would receive a stern, long-winded lecture via email, about how she wouldn't

have to worry about such things if she were married, and why didn't she let her father introduce her to some of the young men at his work? And Glory would delete it, and cry, and retrace all the missteps that had led her to this particular place. She knew her birth story, and what her grandfather had said, but it never made a difference when the time came to make the right choice. She was always drawn to the wrong one, like a dog curious to taste its own vomit.

The next day, Glory arrived at work to see the man sitting in the empty spot next to hers.

"Good morning."

"Hi."

"My name is Thomas. They told me you are also from Nigeria? You don't sound it."

"I've been here since I was six. I hope you don't think I should have kept my accent that long."

He flinched at her rudeness, but pressed on.

"I don't know many Nigerians here. Maybe you can introduce me?"

Glory considered the handful of women she knew who would *love* to be introduced to this guy, still green and fresh. But they saw little of her real life, thought Glory an ad exec with a fabulous living, and any introductions would jeopardize that.

"Sorry, I don't really know anyone, either. You should try talking to someone with real friends."

He laughed, thinking she was joking, and his misunderstanding loosened her tongue. It was nice to talk to someone new who had no expectations of her.

"So, why are you slumming it here with the rest of us? Shouldn't you be interning somewhere fabulous?"

"This is my internship. I actually work in corporate, but thought I should get a better understanding of what happens in the trenches."

"Wait, you're here voluntarily? Are you crazy?"

He laughed again.

"No, it's just... You wouldn't understand."

"I'm not stupid," Glory said, thinking he thought that of her. "So fuck you."

She ignored his "Whoa, where did that come from?" and switched on her

headset, turning her dial to the busiest queue. The calls came in one after the other, leaving Thomas little chance to apologize if he wanted to.

An hour later, he pressed a note into Glory's palm. *I'm sorry, it read. Can I treat you to lunch?*

Her pride said no, but her stomach, last filled with the sandwich she had stolen yesterday afternoon, begged a yes.

She snatched up his pen. *I guess.*

"**M**om, I'm seeing someone." Glory typed and deleted that sentence over and over, never sending it. Her mother would call for sure, and then she'd dissect every description of Thomas till he was flayed to her satisfaction. Her father would ask to hear the "young man's intentions" and the cloying quality of their attention would ruin it.

Thomas would delight them. He went to church every Sunday—though he'd learned to stop inviting her—and he had the bright sort of future that was every parent's dream. He prayed over his meals, before he went to bed, when he woke up. He prayed for her.

Glory despised him. She hated the sheen of accomplishment he wore, so dulled on her. She hated his frugal management of money. She hated that when she pressed him for sex, he demurred, saying that they should wait till they were more serious.

Glory couldn't get enough of him. She loved that he watched Cartoon Network with the glee of a teenager; loved that he could move through a crowd of strangers and emerge on the other side with friends. He didn't seem to mind her coarseness, how her bad luck had deepened her bitterness so that she wished even the best of people ill. He didn't seem to mind how joy had become a finite meal she begrudged seeing anyone but herself consume.

She wanted to ask him what he saw in her, but was afraid the answer would be qualities she knew to be an illusion.

They talked of Nigeria often, or at least he did, telling her about growing up in Onitsha and how he wanted to move back someday. He said "we" and "us" like it was understood that she would go back with him, and she began to savor a future she had never imagined for herself.

She'd been to Nigeria many times, but it was the one thing she kept from him, enjoying, then loathing, then enjoying how excited he was to explain the country to her. He didn't know that what little money she scraped together was spent on a plane ticket to Nigeria every thirteen months, or that over the past few years, she had arrived the day after her grandmother's death, then the day after her great-aunt's death, and then her uncle's, so that her grandfather asked her to let him know when she booked her ticket, so that he could prepare to die. Thomas still didn't know she was unlucky.

She kept it secret to dissuade any probing, not yet aware that people like Thomas were never suspicious, as trusting of the world's goodness as children born to wealth. When she visited her grandfather, with whom she had negotiated a relative peace, they sat together in his room watching TV, Glory getting up only to fetch food or drink for them. Nobody knew why she made the trips as often as she did, or why she eschewed the bustle of Lagos for his sleepy village. She couldn't explain that her grandfather knew her, saw her for what she was—a black hole that compressed and eliminated fortune and joy and happiness—and still opened his home to her, gave her a room and a bed, the mattress so old the underside bore stains from when her mother's water broke.

Near the end of her last stay, their conversation had migrated to her fate.

"There is only disaster in your future if you do not please the gods."

The older she got, the more she felt the truth of it: the deep inhalation her life had been so far, to prepare her for the explosive exhalation that would eventually flatten her.

"Papa, you know I don't have it in me to win anyone's favor, let alone the gods'."

They were both dressed in shorts and singlets, the voltage of the generator being too low to carry anything that cooled. Glory sat on the floor, moving every half hour to relish the chill of the tiles. Her grandfather lounged on the bed.

When he began one of his fables, she closed her eyes.

"A porcupine and a tortoise came to a crossroads, where a spirit appeared before them. 'Carry me to the heart of the river and let me drink,' the spirit said. Neither wanted to be saddled with the spirit, but they could not deny it with no good reason.

"I am slow,' said the tortoise, 'it will take us many years to reach it.'

"I am prickly,' said the porcupine, 'the journey will be too painful.'

"The spirit raged.

"If you don't get me to the heart of the river by nightfall and give me a cup to drink, I will extinguish every creature of your kind.'

"The tortoise and the porcupine conferred. 'What if you carry me,' said the tortoise, 'while I carry the spirit? We will surely make it by nightfall.'

"I have a better idea,' said the porcupine. 'These are no ordinary quills on my back. They are magic quills capable of granting any wish. The only condition is that you must close your eyes and open them only after your wish is granted.'

"The tortoise and the spirit each plucked a quill, eager for desires out of reach. They closed their eyes. That's when the porcupine snatched the quill from the tortoise and jammed it into the flesh of his throat. He filled the spirit's hands with blood, which it drank, thinking the gurgling it heard to be that of the river. But spirits know the taste of blood, and this one lashed out at the porcupine, only to find that it could move no faster than a tortoise. The porcupine continued on his way."

Her grandfather's long pause signaled the end.

"Are you hearing me?"

"Yes, but what does it mean?"

"If you can't please the gods, trick them."

The time with her grandfather had eased the pressure building in her, but then she came back stateside to another stream of catastrophes. Keys left on the plane. An accident in which her foot slipped on the pedal made smooth by the car-insurance check she had forgotten to mail. A job lost for lack of transportation, which is how she ended up disappointing former homeowners in the petri dish of a large call center.

Thomas, on the other hand, was a lucky man. He always seemed to find money lying around in the street, although never so large an amount as to induce alarm or guilt. He got what he wanted, always, and attributed it to ingenuity and perseverance, unaware of the halo of fortune resting on his head. When she had him write the request to restore her Facebook page, it was back up in a day. He would have been appalled to know that she sometimes followed him when they parted ways after work, watching with fascination as he drew amity from everyone who came close.

Some of that luck rubbed off on her, and she found herself receiving invitations to long-standing events she hadn't even known existed. Igbo Women's Fellowship of the Midwest. Daughters of Biafra, Minnesota Chapter. Party, Party, a monthly event rotated among different homes. Sometimes, as she watched Thomas charm a crowd with little effort, she wondered how it was that one person could be so blessed and another not. They had been born in the same state to parents of similar means and faith. Even taking into account the rewards of his maleness, it seemed to Glory that they should have been in the same place. She began to think of his luck as something that had been taken from her, and viewed this relationship as a way to even her odds.

At last they were serious enough for Thomas, and the sex was, not mediocre exactly, but just good—not the mind-blowing experience she had expected it to be. Thomas was moved, and thanked her for trusting him, and she said "You're welcome" in that cutesy, girlish way she knew he would like, even though what she really wanted was for him to not be such a gentleman and fuck her silly.

But the more he said "us" and "we," the less quickly she deleted that "Mom, I'm seeing someone" text. One day, instead of sending it, she posted a picture of her and Thomas on her Facebook wall, setting off a sequence that involved her Port Harcourt cousin calling another cousin who called another and so on and so forth, until the news got to her mother, who called her right away. It took thirty-seven minutes.

Glory waited till just before the call went to voicemail to pick up.

"Hello?"

"Who is he? Praise God! What is his name?"

"Thomas Okongwu."

Her mother started praising God again. Glory couldn't help but laugh. It had been years since any news she delivered over the phone had given her mother cause for joy, and she felt a blush of gratitude. She told her mother about Thomas and his ambitions, getting more animated as her mother got more excited. She ignored the occasional hint of disbelief on the other end of the line, as if her mother couldn't quite believe her daughter had gotten something right.

After that, it was like *everything* she did was right. Her job, long pilloried, was now a good thing. No career, her father said, meant that she could fully concentrate on her children when they came along. That she was terrible at managing money became a non-issue. You see, she had picked the perfect man to make up for her weaknesses. Kind where she was not, frugal where she was not. Successful.

Glory stared at her father's email, meant to comfort but instead bringing to mind the wine and pills and what they could do to a body. She moved it to a folder she had long ago titled EVIDENCE, meant to make the case if she chose to never speak to her father again.

When Thomas asked if she'd like to meet his mother, who was free to travel as his father was not, Glory knew the right answer and gave it. But she panicked at having to impress this woman. Her parents had been easy. Thomas was impressive. She was not.

"Why do you want me to meet her?" The question was a bit coy, but Glory wanted some reassurance to hold on to.

Thomas shrugged.

"She asked to meet you."

"So, you didn't ask her if she wanted to meet me?"

After a patient rolling of eyes, Thomas gripped her shoulders and shook her with gentle exasperation.

"You're always doing this. Of course I want you to meet her and of course she wants to meet you. You're all she ever talks about now, look."

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Thomas dialed his cell phone, and after a pause, he said, "Hey, Mum, she's right here. I'll let you talk, but don't go scaring her off."

Glory heard the woman laugh on the line and say something that made her son laugh too. Then the warm phone was pressed to her ear, and a voice just shy of being too deep for a woman greeted her.

Glory tried to say all the right things about herself and her family, which meant not saying much about herself. She wanted this woman to like her, and, even beyond that, to admire her, something she wasn't sure she could accomplish without lies. She had already pretended to quit her advertising job on her Facebook wall—a "sad day indeed," an old college friend had said, worded so that Glory suspected he knew the truth. (She unfriended him right away.) But Thomas's mother could not be so easily dismissed. Glory trotted out her parents' accomplishments—engineer mother, medical-supply-business-owner father—to shore up her pedigree. Then she mentioned more recent social interests of hers, like the Igbo women's group, leaving out Thomas's hand in that. All the while, her inner voice wondered what the hell she was doing. *Tricking the gods*, she replied.

The day Thomas's mother flew in, Glory cooked for hours at his apartment, soliciting recipes from her own mother, who took much joy in walking her through every step over the phone. By the time he left for the airport, his apartment was as fragrant as a buka, with as large a variety of dishes awaiting eager bellies.

His mother was tall and Glory felt like a child next to her. His mother was also warm, and she folded Glory into a perfumed, bosomy hug.

"Welcome, Ma," Glory said, then wanted to kick herself for sounding so deferential.

"My dear, no need to be so formal, I feel like I've known you for years, the way my son goes on and on. It's me who should be welcoming you into the family."

His mother complimented each dish, tasting a bit of one after the other and nodding before filling her

plate. It was a test, and Glory passed and felt gratified.

Thomas squeezed her leg under the table, a reassuring pressure that said, *See? Nothing to worry about.* But what did a person like him know about worry? When his mother questioned her about her work, it was clear she assumed Glory worked in corporate with Thomas, and neither of them dissuaded her. Yet it rankled Glory, who couldn't decide whether Thomas had stretched the truth into a more presentable fit or had simply overlooked the possibility that his mother would make such an assumption.

It didn't seem to matter to Thomas's mother, who expressed her delight that Glory would soon leave and come to stay with her in Nigeria, something Glory and Thomas had never discussed. He squeezed her leg again, the pressure less reassuring: *Please don't argue with my mother.*

Glory felt it then, that peculiar itch at the back of her neck that flared up when she came to a crossroads. She ignored the sensation and returned Thomas's squeeze, and he relaxed, changing the subject to his mother's schedule for the next day, which he and Glory would have off.

Thomas excused himself, leaving the two women to talk alone. He promised to be back in an hour and left to run an errand. Every minute that passed without Thomas by her side, Glory felt as though a veil was slipping off her, revealing more and more of her true nature. She didn't say or do anything different, but she felt his mother close off a bit, leaning back as though to consider what manner of girl she was.

After thirty minutes, his mother's pleasantness cooled to politeness and Glory excused herself to the bathroom before it chilled further. *You have to come back now*, she texted Thomas. *Now!*

And he did, interrupting a lie his mother could have uncovered with very little research. Perfect timing as always. Always perfect.

Not long after, the ease between the two women returned, but the more they talked, the more his mother touched on the expectation that Glory would drop everything and go back to Nigeria and live there with her hypo-

thetical children, in her mother-in-law's house. If the idea had been hers, Glory might not have minded it—but this was being discussed as a given, not a choice. Thomas was most comfortable in Nigeria and would move back when he was done with schooling to join his wife, who would already be settled. And Thomas was a man who got what he wanted. All the "we" and "us" now felt less like a collaboration and more like a general compelling his troops. It surprised Glory to realize that she was not the only one scheming.

After they took his mother to her hotel, Thomas and Glory idled in the parking lot, each waiting for the other to break the silence. Then, offering neither apology nor explanation, Thomas placed a box in Glory's lap. She opened it, the hinge levering to reveal a ring that, just a year ago, she would never have imagined receiving anytime soon, or ever. The itch returned to her neck.

A part of Glory had always thought to win her parents' good graces by her own merit. She believed that one day, she would eventually stumble into accomplishments that she could hold up as her own, that the seeming chaos of her life would coalesce into an intricate puzzle whose shape one could see only when it was complete. That this ring was to be her salvation—she couldn't bear it. And yet, salvation it was. Acceptance into many proper folds. Lies she would never again have to tell. She could lose herself in the whirlwind of Thomas, golden child turned golden man.

But then Glory thought of the first time she had turned her luck with something truly reckless, the thing with the dog. She had felt itchy all over and there was her uncle's dog, napping. A thought wormed into her head, that the itch would go away if she touched the dog's tongue, and it was suddenly the right and only thing to do. She rubbed the scar on her thumb, thinking of all the times she had picked stupid over sensible, knowing, just knowing, she'd gotten it right. She could not afford to get it wrong this time.

She looked at the ring, and resentment and elation warred till one overcame the other and Glory made another decision. ■

NEW BOOKS

By Christine Smallwood



Julia Ward Howe published her first book of poetry on December 23, 1853, when she was thirty-four years old. It must have made a rather nice Christmas present for her husband, Samuel Gridley Howe, a distinguished doctor who had recently been rejected by the same press and who had no clue that his wife was shopping a manuscript of her own. And not just any manuscript: *Passion-Flowers* was an intensely personal airing of desires and grievances, the catalogue of a mutually unsatisfying union. The one that got everyone in Boston talking was “Mind Versus Mill-Stream,” in which a miller looking for a “mild, efficient brook” finds himself confronting an ungovernable and “perverse” river:

For men will woo the tempest,
And wed it, to their cost,
Then swear they took it for summer
dew,
And ah! their peace is lost!

Subtle, no?

As Elaine Showalter’s excellent new biography, *THE CIVIL WARS OF JULIA WARD HOWE* (Simon & Schuster, \$28, simonandschuster.com), makes plain, the “apparent autobiographical nature and intellectual range” of Julia’s poetry was unusual for a time when most verses authored by women ran the gamut from simpering to sentimental. *Passion-Flowers* got some positive reviews—okay, Nathaniel Hawthorne did say that Julia “ought to have been soundly whipt for publishing” it—and sold out its first edition in a matter of weeks. Unsurprisingly, it proved less popular at home. Samuel—who went by Chev in homage to the Chevalier

of the Order of St. Saviour that he was awarded for serving in the Greek war of independence, and who owned the plumed helmet Byron had taken to Missolonghi—was a handsome, domineering man eighteen years Julia’s senior. He issued two demands: that Julia revise the book for its second edition, and that she resume the marital relations that had been dormant for the previous eighteen months. Julia anticipated the birth of the resulting child, her fifth, in a letter to her sister: “My mental suffering during these nine months nearly past has been so great that I cannot be afraid of bodily torture.... I dread to see the face of my child, for I know I cannot love it.” This was not the only time that

Julia conceived of motherhood as a punishment. She had referred to an earlier blessed event as “the unwelcome little unborn.”

On November 18, 1861, a parade that Julia was watching in northern Virginia was interrupted by a Confederate attack; that night, she wrote the poem that made her a celebrity, “Battle Hymn of the Republic,” which put new words to the popular army song “John Brown’s Body.” (Chev had been a member of the Secret Six who funded Brown, though he later testified before the Senate that he had no knowledge of the plan to raid Harper’s Ferry.) Showalter argues that the “Battle Hymn” fused Julia’s feeling of domination by Chev with the Union cause: “During the Civil War, Julia understood that she was also fighting a domestic and personal civil war.” It’s a persuasive reading, but the phrase is icky, as if slavery and the oppression of women were fungible. What’s certain is that women made gains during the war because, as Julia herself wrote, they “found a new scope for their activities, and developed abilities hitherto unsuspected by themselves.” Her particular scope broadened to include the suffrage movement. In the 1880s, she campaigned for a bill that would guarantee widows half of their husband’s estate. She knew whereof she spoke: Chev, who died in 1876, had disinherited her.

Julia continued to write poetry, but none of it reached the heights of the

“Battle Hymn,” or even “Mind Versus Mill-Stream.” She never got around to finishing the most interesting thing she started, a sensational novel about a hermaphrodite named Laurence that she drafted between 1846 and 1848. Showalter reads these fragments as an allegory of “the woman artist,” who is “not only a divided

soul, but also a monster doomed to solitude and sorrow.” Solitude, however,



was not Julia's way. She wasn't the kind of writer who scratched away in an attic room, holding out for posthumous glory; she was too busy organizing clubs and arranging speaking engagements. She wanted something more threatening to male power than mere artistic greatness—a public life. “I do not desire ecstatic, disembodied sainthood,” she wrote. “I would be human, and American, and a woman.”

In 1857, Julia read a bestseller that treated its subject in terms close to sainthood: Elizabeth Gaskell's *The Life of Charlotte Brontë*. “Charlotte Brontë is deeply interesting,” Julia wrote, “but I think she and I should not have liked each other, while still I see points of resemblance, many indeed, between us.” It's a fair assessment: Brontë was not known to be especially likable. Intense, needy, morbidly shy, sensitive, awkward, sermonizing, and averse to dancing or games, she was dreadful at small talk and very ugly, with thinning hair and missing teeth, though she did have bright, intelligent eyes. What points of resemblance Julia saw are not entirely clear, but they probably had to do with feelings of thwartedness and confinement. She did not bother to read *Jane Eyre*, but if she had, the great Brontëan drama—the longing for a spirited male equal—would doubtless have resonated.

Mrs. Gaskell's biography laid out the fundamentals of the Brontë myth that persists to our day—those feral children of the moors, dying one after the other under a brooding, distant father who paced the parsonage with a loaded gun. Claire Harman's **CHARLOTTE BRONTË: A FIERY HEART** (Knopf, \$30, knopfdoubleday.com) is a fascinating, deeply researched study that resists the impulse to romanticize while still grappling with how strange and afflicted the Brontës really were. Charlotte was born in 1816 and lost her mother in 1821; three years later, she was sent to the grim Cowan Bridge school, the model for *Jane Eyre*'s Lowood and the place where her elder sisters, Maria and Elizabeth, caught tuberculosis and died.

From childhood well into their twenties, the four surviving Brontë siblings amused themselves by making up stories about imaginary worlds. Emily and Anne, the youngest, dreamed up Gondal, while Charlotte and her younger brother, Branwell, had Angria, whose denizens included the Duke of Wellington (Charlotte's number-one crush) and the fictitious villain Northangerland. They bound these stories into booklets and magazines that were tiny in size but exceptional in word count, far surpassing their collective published output. Whatever was playful about the project turned dark and chaotic while Charlotte was teaching at Roe Head, a school eighteen miles from home, in the mid-1830s. In her journals she documented her panting visions of Angria, and her students described her writing in a trancelike state during class periods, covering the pages in cramped handwriting, her eyes closed all the while. Harman makes the interesting suggestion that such reveries might have been induced by opium. Charlotte denied ever trying laudanum drops when Mrs. Gaskell asked about it in



1853—an odd claim, given their popularity and availability—but by that point Branwell had succumbed to addiction, and she may not have wanted to endorse the drug. At any rate, the strain of negotiating what Harman calls her “double life” led to

a breakdown, and in 1838 Charlotte returned to the Haworth parsonage.

At times, *A Fiery Heart* reads like a warped bildungsroman in which the Brontë siblings, instead of moving from the country to the city, set out time and again to make their fortune—as governesses, teachers, or, in Branwell's case, poet, painter, and railway booking clerk—only to wind up back home. In most families, daughters would have been expected to marry their way out of what was a serious economic dilemma. But no matter how desperate the situation became,

marriage seems to have been almost literally the last thing on the Brontë sisters' minds. Spiritual communion, yes; love, sex, the sublime, yes; but the conventional female fate of marriage and motherhood does not appear either to have troubled or allured them much.

In her twenties, Charlotte turned down two proposals.

Eventually, a scheme was hatched for the girls to open a school of their own, and Charlotte and Emily went to Brussels to acquire the “finishing” necessary to attract pupils. The pensionnat in which they enrolled was run by the formidable Zoë Heger and her husband, Constantin, a French master who also taught at the boys academy next door and quickly became the love of Charlotte's life. Heger was the model for Paul Emanuel in *Villette*, although “model” is too coy by half; he is the tempestuous, brilliant Paul, down to his manner and turns of phrase, and he's also visible in the outlines of Rochester in *Jane Eyre*, and the Moore brothers in *Shirley*, and William Crimsworth in *The Professor*. It's not what you're thinking: “The union she craved with Heger was one of souls,” Harman writes. “Anything so paltry as a conventional friendship, anything as quotidian as adultery even, was clearly not in her mind.”

Emily, by many accounts the most gifted member of the Brontë family, required only the company of her dog, but it was Charlotte's burden that she sought emotional companionship, intellectual exchange—in a

word, recognition. (She was also the savviest about navigating the publishing world.) Heger was a dynamic, romantic figure, but even if he wasn't her equal—who could have been?—she made him into a figure she could love.

My own theory about Charlotte is that the school essays she wrote for Heger in Brussels are the key to her oeuvre. She smuggled elements of the Angrian world into these compositions, which he taught her to revise, and then she imported the compositions into her novels. More at home in the “burning clime” of Angrian fantasy, she always struggled with realism, and the aggression and hatred that scholars typically point out in her work is, I think, the residue of this tussle with genre.

What Heger felt for Charlotte is hard to say; he certainly relished having such an eager student, and he gave her gifts, including a piece of wood from the crate that held Napoleon's coffin—a fetish object for a Wellington partisan such as her. But there's no denying that the attachment was lopsided. No letters from Heger to Charlotte survive. Four of what was presumably a barrage of hers were preserved by Zoë Heger, who planned to use them as evidence of Charlotte's unhinged obsession, should any accusation of impropriety surface. One of these lingered on Heger's desk long enough to serve as scratch paper. “Next to Charlotte's pleas—‘I am in a fever—I lose my appetite and my sleep—I pine away’—he has noted the address of a cobbler.”

The sisters began publishing under the pseudonyms Currer, Ellis, and Acton Bell in 1846. It's worth noting that Charlotte wrote *Jane Eyre* only after reading Emily's Gothic *Wuthering Heights* and Anne's *Agnes Grey*, a roman à clef about being a governess. (It is cruelly ironic that the critics called *Agnes Grey* a weak imitation of *Jane Eyre*—Anne always was the most overlooked.) Contemporary readers may not immediately grasp how bold and strange Charlotte's novels were. In everyday travesties—disgusting boarding-school food, corporal punishment, women frittering their lives

away waiting to be married off—she saw matters of thundering, soul-destroying injustice. This led to accusations of rabble-rousing. The *Christian Remembrancer* charged *Jane Eyre* with “moral Jacobinism” and *The Quarterly Review* called it dangerously Chartist, but Charlotte's rebellion was spiritual; her desire was for submission to a worthy hand, not class warfare. (Like her father, she was both sympathetic to and alarmed by local labor uprisings.) Although her themes always involve the disciplining of raging passion, she took almost no edits from her publishers. Her novels are, technically, disasters. They open on scenes that have little or no bearing on the main plot; they are hectoring and digressive, pausing often to prophesy or address the reader directly; they indulge in impossible disguises, double identities, and absurd reveals. They are out of control in a way comparable only to Melville or Dostoevsky. But while their action is alternately bizarre and plodding, they are subjectively acute; *Villette*, Harman writes, reached “psychological depths never attempted in fiction before.”

A Fiery Heart concludes with—what else?—a marriage, and the triumph of the long-suffering local curate Arthur Bell Nicholls, who waited seven years to declare himself. He had a second-rate mind—“I cannot conceal from myself that he is not intellectual,” Charlotte said—but she grew to love him, albeit briefly. She died nine months after they married, at the age of thirty-eight. It has long been thought that consumption killed her, but Harman blames a severe reaction to pregnancy hormones. There is the tantalizing possibility that if Mrs. Gaskell had known of Charlotte's troubles she might have helped: “I do fancy that if I had come, I could have induced her,” she wrote, “to do what was so absolutely necessary for her very life”: i.e., an abortion. It is tempting to conclude that domesticity itself murdered Charlotte Brontë, but of course, to do so only perpetuates a different myth—that of the female genius doomed to unhappy solitude, the madwoman aflame. ■

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NEW DRAMA

By Rivka Galchen

The Wooster Group, an experimental-theater company in New York, has been doing its ludic, fevered work for forty years now. Though its shows, in description, can sound like bad ideas that some smart graduate students came up with at two in the morning, in performance they are almost always very funny, and also an encounter with serious, enduring art. Often they reimagine canonical works. Sort of. *House/Lights* paired Gertrude Stein's *Doctor Faustus Lights the Lights* with *Olga's House of Shame*, an old B movie. *The Emperor Jones*, by Eugene O'Neill, was staged with Kabuki-like dance interludes and featured the actress Kate Valk, in blackface, as the male lead. *Hamlet* was performed with, and against, an edited film of Richard Burton's 1964 Broadway production, which was shown on screens for much of the Wooster version. Valk played both Ophelia and Gertrude, while Scott Shepherd, as the prince, called out to fast-forward, pause, or skip scenes.

When I saw their *Hamlet*, in 2007, I was, I confess, filled for the first twenty minutes or so with a longing for "ordinary" Shakespeare. But after the dulling effects of expectation and familiarity were killed off, the similarities between Ophelia and Gertrude began to make new sense; Shepherd's quiet and somewhat distracted delivery of the "To be, or not to be" speech paradoxically made the words feel freshly meaningful; and by the end of the show, I felt as if, for the first time, I had glimpsed the play's true spirit. It was the best *Hamlet* I have ever seen. The Wooster performers are clowns running a séance. What's wondrous strange is that the ghosts reliably turn up.

The Wooster Group is now engaged with Harold Pinter's first play, *THE ROOM*, which previewed at the Performing Garage, in New York, in October and opened in February at REDCAT, in Los Angeles. I was curious what the group might do with



Pinter, who has one of the most recognizable styles of the past century. His work is known for its bated violence, and for its tense, often funny dialogue, although the audience rarely understands the sources of the tension, and the characters rarely understand that they come off as funny. Pinter's plays are also renowned for their pauses, which are written into the stage directions; these silences seem to occupy the space where, in the past, a Greek chorus might have interjected.

First performed in 1957, *The Room* is a one-act black comedy, with all of

comedy's familiar features: misunderstandings, callbacks, innuendos, and arguments about whether or not to sit in a particular chair. It was written in just a few days, and the uninhibited energy of its creation was channeled into a deeply elemental structure. A woman, Rose, lives in a rented room, in what seems to be lower-middle-class England in the 1950s, with the nearly silent Bert. After Bert goes out, a young couple looking for a place to live drops by; they seem to want Rose and Bert's room. Later, another stranger, an old "blind Negro," visits. But the stranger doesn't really seem to be a stranger; he calls Rose "Sal" and asks her to come home. After Bert returns and gives a bizarre speech (strongly reminiscent of Lucky's in *Waiting for Godot*), he brutally beats the visitor. In a sense, the one-act's structure is formal and classic—who's in the room, who's not, and is all that menacing darkness coming from within or without? The tropes are ancient: a stranger comes to town, a traveler returns.

In the Wooster Group's production, the shabby, naturalistic setting has been transformed into something altogether different: the kitchen sink center stage trails a pipe leading to nowhere, the television screens that are partially visible to the audience show what appear to be Chinese political debates, and Kate Valk, the actress who plays Rose, uses a flyswatter as a ukulele while she sings some of her lines in a tonal pattern that recalls the koi ponds one visits only in imagination. The stage directions are spoken aloud by the actors, which means that each of Pinter's pauses is announced. The video footage is actually "crosstalk," a kind of two-man stand-up comedy that the Wooster Group came across in its recent travels through China. While performing *The Room*, the actors wear earpieces that pipe the crosstalk dialogue—in its original Chinese, which none of them understand—among other things, into their ears. So the actors "surf" (their term) the speech patterns of the

foreign comedians, which leads to odd cadences and surprising emphases.

Somehow it works. Consider one characteristic pause, when Rose breaks the tension that has accumulated between her and her unexpected guests by taking up the man's mention of his wife's name:

ROSE: Clarissa? What a pretty name.

MRS. SANDS: Yes, it is nice, isn't it? My father and mother gave it to me.

[Pause] You know, this is a room you can sit down and feel cosy in.

The awkwardness interrupted by the pleasantries—"What a pretty name"—is immediately revived by Mrs. Sands's confusingly obvious elucidation. The pause that follows her statement is typically comic; since no one onstage remarks on the oddness of what Mrs. Sands has said, a gap is left for the audience to inhabit. This works beautifully in almost any performance of *The Room*; it got a laugh in the Wooster Group show too. But the actors' crosstalk surfing introduces other pauses. These erratic silences come not from Pinter's studied psychology but from somewhere more subconscious—a trace phenomenon that results from an actor trying to follow the script and the crosstalk at once. They make *The Room* feel vital again, and, perhaps surprisingly, more psychological—more evocative of the automatism and unintentional emotional disclosures of everyday life.

In other productions of *The Room*, some of the comic dialogue comes across as portentous, as when Rose says to Bert, "It's very cold out, I can tell you. It's murder." In the Wooster Group production, these lines still attract attention, but other, softer lines also insist on themselves. A remark as simple as "We've not long come in" has stayed with me. The words seem to carry the weight of civilization: we human beings have not long come in from the wild. (Such thoughts need silliness to keep them honest and bearable, and that, I think, is where a flyswatter that doubles as an air ukulele helps.) Because these lines register as both substantive and slight, they gain access to the normally highly guarded emotional space of the theatergoer. The it's-just-a-play barrier falls away, in part because the performers have tak-

en on the burden of saying "It's just a play" for us; they are, after all, reading the stage directions aloud.

But what can those simple Pinter lines mean? *The Room* is clearly "about" class and race in midcentury England, but the play has mythic qualities as well. The Wooster production, even with its conspicuous earpieces, felt like a conjuring of nervous Neanderthals (or postapocalyptic humans) who are not yet accustomed to reliable shelter. It seemed to take place simultaneously under a ginkgo tree millennia ago, in England in 1957, and in a goofy sacred garage in Manhattan. The only special note in the program mentions the company's drive to pay for the heating and cooling system that was recently installed at the Performing Garage; so much effort goes into basic physical comforts, into finding a serviceable roof and four walls. The program offers no explanation for the crosstalk. Elsewhere, Kate Valk has explained:

A lot of how we work, with the in-ear tracks and the cues off the televisions, keeps us responding in the moment, shortening the time between impulse and action, so what we do is cued from this outside stimulus. And that can keep changing, so there is the potential for the unpredictable.

It's as if being too attentive to the actors' methods would be like taking their breakfast habits or working heart rates too seriously; external stimuli may fuel their performances, but they don't explain them.

Still, Wooster Group productions tend to bring out our anxious clue-seeking drive. Obeying this instinct is occasionally thrilling. In *The Room*, Valk wears a strange sort of padded pouch, which looks like a cross between a misplaced bustle and a fanny pack, around her waist. Such pouches, sometimes used by other theater companies to alter the shapes of performers' bodies in more conventional costuming, often appear in Wooster productions in ways that don't seem to refer to any probable anatomy. Seeing these lumpy appendages evolve over time—sometimes they serve as sexual accessories that are petted and stroked, sometimes they are just weirdly there—is moving in an unexpected

way. In this production, in which Rose speaks at length to a man who offers no words in return, the pouch almost seems like a visual manifestation of the unspoken emotional energy onstage.

In trying to follow the Wooster Group's meanings over the years, I have come to think of them in relation to one of the stranger moments in the New Testament, when Jesus explains the parable of the sower to his disciples. This is the one about a farmer sowing seeds—some get eaten by birds, some land in rocky soil, but some find fertile ground and produce a good crop. When the disciples ask the meaning of the story, an irritated Jesus explains that the seeds are the Word of God, the varieties of soil are the varieties of people who hear the Word, etc. The story means just what it sounds like it means.

Is it really a parable, then? Religious and academic commentators have offered many thoughts about this passage and about Jesus' claim that he speaks in parables so that only the initiated will understand him—a troublesome idea to many Christians. And to many theatergoers. Shouldn't meaning be simple and clear? For myself, I like the idea that Jesus' straightforward parable and exegesis are both about seeing the surface of what is right there—the surface is the depth. Wooster Group shows are, in their way, exceptionally faithful to their sources. In its *Hamlet* production, the group restored and emphasized the iambic pentameter—Scott Shepherd paused at the ends of lines, not of sentences—and it edited the Burton film to follow the same cadence. Many Pinter productions deal with his pauses, which are now almost too famous, by leaving them out—an approach that Pinter himself endorsed. But the Wooster Group, of course, leaves out none of them. True nonsense is fragile, and it follows stricter rules than the sense that it obliquely describes. The Wooster Group puts on shows that feel inevitable and random at once. They don't translate, resolve, or grow outdated. The best response to their wondrous strangeness might be that recommended by a Danish prince more than 400 years ago, in an English play that was based on a story that had itself already been around for 400 years: as a stranger, bid it welcome. ■

BEGINNING TO SEE THE LIGHT

Religious conversion across the ages

By Gary Greenberg

Discussed in this essay:

Strange Gods: A Secular History of Conversion, by Susan Jacoby. Pantheon.

512 pages. \$29.95. pantheon.knopfdoubleday.com.

Radical: My Journey out of Islamist Extremism, by Maajid Nawaz. Lyons.

296 pages. \$26.95. lyonspress.com.

Islam and the Future of Tolerance: A Dialogue, by Sam Harris and Maajid Nawaz.

Harvard University Press. 144 pages. \$17.95. hup.harvard.edu.

When I attended Swarthmore College, in the mid-Seventies, it had an active religious life. The school was founded by Quakers, and its on-campus Friends meetinghouse was filled most Sundays. Religion classes were taught by ordained ministers. Orange-clad denizens of the local Ananda Marga ashram sat in the student center chatting up would-be recruits, and Jesus Freaks sat outside the dining hall clutching denim-bound Good News Bibles and handing out GET SMART GET SAVED buttons, ready to tell anyone who would listen that Jesus was the first hippie.

Like the outside world, the campus was a burbling, bustling bazaar of belief, and we—with our duck-and-cover childhoods, our Vietnam adolescences, our nuclear families gone critical, our mendacious politicians, and our ravenous, pillaging beast of an economy—were the perfect market, set up for the one-two punch William James noted in the course of describing the “uniform deliverance in which religions all appear to meet”:

1. An uneasiness; and
2. Its solution.

1. The uneasiness, reduced to its simplest terms, is a sense that there is

something wrong about us as we naturally stand.

2. The solution is a sense that we are saved from the wrongness by making proper connection with the higher powers.

A few of my cohort wandered back to religion, temporarily or permanently; one friend even ran off with the Get Smart people. But despite our shared uneasiness, most of us were content with solutions that required less of us—silent hand-holding around the dinner table, vague nature worship, psychedelic drugs. All were sincerely pursued, and all seemed to offer salvation from whatever was wrong about us.

It took a woman to show me that my wrongness demanded a more concentrated form of connection with the higher powers. Mostly she did this by withholding sex, on the grounds that her guru advised chastity. He also frowned on smoking pot, eating eggs, and thinking unkind thoughts, demanding instead early mornings, quiet evenings, and meditation twice a day. In return, he promised access to the Divine Light and Sound of God, which did not seem as attractive as weed, omelets, and calumny, but then again nothing seemed as attractive as my chaste friend, especially not when she lay in bed next to me resisting my entreaties.

Occasionally, the guru would journey from India to the United States, and his followers would pile into cars

to meet him. Which is how I found myself in a suburban D.C. living room, seated on the floor with twenty or so others in front of a bearded, turbaned man with dark, deep-set eyes who was explaining in a sibilant Hindi accent how the Science of the Soul could be grasped not theoretically but only through a Living Master like him.

The room was darkened for meditation. I assumed the position I'd learned from my friend during our bedroom training sessions—blankets over heads, fingers (or earplugs, for those who had come prepared) in ears. I don't know if it was the presence of so many meditators all knocking on the same heavenly door, or that of the Master himself, seated in front of us, serene and even radiant, urging us to our deepest inner reaches, but within moments I was overtaken by exactly what I had been told to expect but had never yet seen or heard: light, stars that stippled the darkness, whirled into a galaxy, and then exploded in supernovas behind my eyelids; and sound, vague and chaotic at first, like an orchestra tuning, that slowly congealed into harmony and finally became a single blaring note, a blast from Gabriel's horn that threatened to never end. Tears streamed down my face. I was ready to throw myself prostrate at the Master's feet. I was ready to be chaste and kind and vegetarian and even drug free. I had made the proper connection. I had been saved from my wrongness.

St. Augustine's conversion, in fourth-century Milan, also had to do with sex. He'd already spent much of his youth chasing women, even as he was trying to tame his worldly appetites, when a child's overheard remark—“Take it and read”—led him to open the book of Paul's letters that lay in front of him:

In silence I read the first passage on which my eyes fell: “Not in revelling and drunkenness, not in lust and wantonness, not in quarrels and rivalries. Rather, arm yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ; spend no more thought on nature and nature's appetites.” I had no wish to read more and no need to do so. For in an instant, as

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I came to the end of the sentence, it was as though the light of confidence flooded into my heart and all the darkness of doubt was dispelled.

In his *Confessions*, Augustine recalls thanking the Lord the moment he emerged from this experience. “You converted me to yourself,” he exulted, “so that I no longer desired a wife or placed any hope in this world but stood firmly upon the rule of faith.” It wasn’t free will that had finally delivered him from his wrongness, that allowed him to want what he wished to want, but sudden and unbidden surrender. Salvation may have spoken in a still, small voice, but it ran over Augustine like a train.

Augustine, like Saul of Damascus before him, was suddenly transformed, but Susan Jacoby argues that both men, and all the converts who followed, got their own experiences wrong. In *Strange Gods*, she suggests that converts who thought God was speaking directly to them, inhabiting their souls and rearranging their minds, saw through a glass darkly. Obscured from their view was history, politics, and, above all, the beliefs that accrue silently, the background assumptions that shape our understanding of raw experience into the stories we tell ourselves about who we are—in short, ideology.

That something strange and even wonderful happened to Augustine of Hippo cannot be denied. That it was

the Holy Spirit moving through him in the way God always has and always will move, or that there is a God at all: these ideas, Jacoby insists, must be questioned. Augustine’s conversion took place at a time when the Roman Empire was vying for political power with the Church, and as Christianity and Manichaeism and a thousand brands of paganism were competing for the souls of men. His father was a pagan, his mother a Christian whose interest in his sex life may or may not have led to his troubles with women. Ambitious and curious and eloquent, with a scientist’s interest in the workings of the mind, and especially of memory, Augustine serves as an exemplar of Jacoby’s argument that personal and social history provide the content of the conversion experience.

That’s not how it looked to Augustine, of course. He didn’t understand that the Church, having “managed to take full advantage of the anxieties of the era,” had already colonized his mind so thoroughly that when he felt whatever stirrings he felt, he could not but attribute them to the Christian God. To the contrary, Jacoby argues, he believed that the nature of his conversion was self-evident, that, as she puts it, “anyone who is exposed to the Gospels and refuses to accept them is committing the most grievous form of sin and perpetuating the evil error . . . of choosing a life and philosophy without Jesus at its center.” Only a sinner could fail to see the truth of Christianity, and his failure to see something so obvious was the proof of his sinfulness.

In reaching this conclusion, Jacoby argues, Augustine provided the rationale for trying to save Jews and other sinners from their own wrongness, unleashing the epidemics of coerced conversion that have swept societies for the past 1,500 years. In Jacoby’s telling, this disastrous history is especially tragic in light of how close Martin Luther once came to immunizing the Western world from religious compulsion—and how quickly this promise was lost. The Reformation, Jacoby says, started off as a liberation of individual conscience from the hegemony of the Catholic

Church, but within twenty-five years of Luther's apostasy at Wittenberg, John Calvin had returned to Geneva and joined with civil authorities to enforce his doctrine. It wasn't the bloodbath of the Inquisition, but by 1546, ten insufficiently pious Genevans had lost their heads and thirty-five had been burned at the stake. More important, Calvin's "reforms" had instituted a reign of spiritual terror. "By day and by night," Stefan Zweig wrote in an account quoted by Jacoby, "there might come a knocking at the entry and a number of 'spiritual police' announce a 'visitation' without the concerned citizen's being able to offer resistance." In such a climate, how could even a genuine conversion be said to be freely arrived at? How could reformation mean anything other than what Jacoby calls "the substitution of one absolute truth for another"?

To Zweig, this reversal was part and parcel of the revolutionary impulse. The "reign of force which originates out of a movement towards liberty," he wrote, "is always more strenuously opposed to the idea of liberty than is a hereditary power." Revolutionaries know better than anyone how fragile the hold on power can be. But Jacoby thinks this "paradox of protestantisms" goes beyond politics. She situates it in "the incompatibility of a core belief in the right of individuals to directly engage with God's truth through reading the Bible and a quickly emerging intolerance of divergent conclusions about that truth." On her reading, Luther and his successors failed to follow their own liberationist impulse to its logical end: a world in which the only conversion worth undergoing is from faith-based ignorance to reason-based enlightenment, and the only possible apostasy is intolerance.

As Jacoby's history of conversions from Paul's to Muhammad Ali's moves into the present, her target becomes less the gods and the religions they inspire, and more the intolerance built into the "absolute-truth claims" that are the sine qua non of religion—not just of organized religion but of all ideologies. "There is little difference between a

revolutionary and a traditionalist faith," Arthur Koestler wrote in a passage that she uses as an epigraph. "All true faith is uncompromising, radical, purist." This is why, at least according to Jacoby, Stalinism was as much a religion as Catholicism, and why conversions as disparate as Whittaker Chambers's to Communism, G. K. Chesterton's to Catholicism, and C. S. Lewis's to Anglicanism must be seen as responses to the same yearning, sharpened by the displacements of modernity, for absolute certainty, moral and otherwise. Quoting Koestler again—"There is now an answer to every question, doubts and conflicts are a matter of the tortured past... Nothing henceforth can disturb the convert's inner peace and serenity"—Jacoby makes clear who deserves scorn for intolerance: not the gods but the converts, who are too pusillanimous to resist the temptations of absolute truth, too weak to see that God, mercifully, died as soon as we got enlightened enough to say he might be dead, too terrified to recognize that when it comes to figuring out how to live and what to believe, we are on our own.

Reading Jacoby—who tells us that she has been an atheist since age fourteen—on the subject of religious conversion is a little like reading a sex manual written by a nun. She acknowledges that the phenomenon exists, she has studied what other people have to say about it, but she doesn't seem much moved by those accounts. Nor does she seem to understand that to rely on reason to negotiate our moral and political lives is to have faith that the faculty by which we uncover the secrets of the natural world can also tell us how we should live. Neither does she recognize that it is ideology—her secularism, not common sense or logic—that is offended by religious fervor. To say, with Thomas Paine, that "my own mind is my own church," as Jacoby does, is to make what may be the mother of all absolute-truth claims. Science will never prove that God does not exist, nor will the MRI debunk sudden conversion as a neurochemical thunderstorm amplified by whatever religious ideology happens to be at hand.

It may be a cheap shot to point out that an apostle of enlightenment is still an apostle, or to suggest that the recent spate of militantly atheist books, of which Jacoby's is only the most recent example, can be read as gospels of faith in human progress. But it's nowhere near as cheap as the shot that Sam Harris takes at Maajid Nawaz at the beginning of *Islam and the Future of Tolerance*, an account of a dialogue between Harris, a prominent atheist, and Nawaz, a former radical Islamist. "You want to convince the world ... that Islam is a religion of peace that has been hijacked by extremists," he tells Nawaz. "But the problem is that Islam *isn't* a religion of peace, and the so-called 'extremists' are seeking to implement what is arguably the most honest reading of the faith's actual doctrine."

"Islam is not a religion of war or of peace—it's a religion," Nawaz replies. "Religion doesn't inherently speak for itself; no scripture, no book, no piece of writing has its own voice." It is the practitioners of religion who give the sacred texts their meaning, he says. Most Muslims are not extremists, so if "Islam is only what its adherents interpret it to be, then it is currently a religion of peace."

Given the bad faith of Harris's question, the mildness of Nawaz's response is surprising, even admirable. It's certainly different from the response that he would have given twenty years earlier, when he was a firebrand student leader of Hizb ut-Tahrir, a group that sought to unite all Muslim countries under a caliphate long before anyone had heard of the Islamic State. Nawaz was only sixteen when he joined H.T., but his conversion to Islamism wasn't his first—at least not by Jacoby's definition, which encompasses "any shift of belief that significantly alters the course of a life." As an eleven-year-old British-Pakistani boy living in racially polarized southeastern England, Nawaz heard N.W.A.'s "Fuck tha Police." "I was never the same again," he writes in *Radical*, his memoir. "This was the sound of a community finding its voice.... They were saying *you treat us like that, and we're going to take the fight straight back to you.*"

Nawaz spent his early adolescence bringing the fight back to the white kids who had tormented him, but the hip-hop solution to his uneasiness didn't last. Professor Griff's invocations of Malcolm X and Brand Nubian's sampling of the Muslim call to prayer had made Islam "feel vibrant and interesting," and in his teens, when he learned of the genocide of Muslims in Bosnia, he began to think that there was an oppression more fundamental than racism. His second conversion was consummated when one of his posse faced down a gang of white boys who were armed with baseball bats by telling them, "We're Muslims and we don't fear death. . . . We're suicide bombers. We've been taught how to make bombs, and I've got one in my back-pack." Nawaz explains:

In one conversation, Islamism did what hip-hop couldn't do. It was alive, beating in the hearts of men, and it was prepared to sacrifice everything to regain lost dignity. It wasn't interested in singing "Fuck tha Police." Islamism was shouting from the tops of mountains "Fuck all y'all!"

Nawaz's account of his conversions is at once a confirmation of and a rebuke to Jacoby's analysis. He presents them as powerful experiences that changed the trajectory of his life. But he is not—and, if we are to believe him, was not at the time—so thunderstruck, so convinced that God was speaking directly to him in a timeless language, that he failed to recognize biographical forces at work even as they remade him. The subject of his conversion may have been religion, but it was apparent to him from the beginning that his new cause wasn't "a religious movement with political consequences"—it was "a political movement with religious consequences." Historical awareness did not prevent Nawaz from experiencing his conversion in religious terms.

In this sense, his turn to Islamism was fully modern, or even post-modern, understood, while it was happening, as a change in the narrative that was shaping him. Indeed, he says, "the message of Islamism

was almost tailor-made for someone like me: intellectually curious and brought up in a Western environment." Joining H.T. was not primarily about faith, nor was his reading of scripture the "vacuous literalism" of groups such as Al Qaeda. H.T.'s hermeneutics were more sophisticated than that. They focused on "ideas and narratives," and in particular on the way sweeping historical forces had subjected Muslims everywhere to mistreatment.

The caliphate sought by H.T. would curtail free speech, amputate the hands of thieves, and execute apostates, adulterers, and homosexuals, but only as part of a larger identity politics. Islamism was the ideology of an oppressed people reclaiming their dignity. The "Muslim superstate [was] the answer to all the injustice meted out to the Muslim populations of the world." It was a political solution to the uneasiness that resulted from a thousand years of oppression, one that would create a nation where it was safe to be a Muslim.

Nawaz was twenty-four when he was arrested in Egypt for attempting to recruit for H.T. Imprisoned for five years, he began to question Muslim extremism, especially the brand practiced by the jihadists among his fellow inmates. His doubts were catalyzed into apostasy when Amnesty International "adopted" him as a prisoner of conscience. "The unconditional nature of Amnesty's support . . . humbled me," he writes. It conveyed a message strikingly different from H.T.'s: "You're a human being, so you deserve our support." He realized that "Islamism derives part of its power from its dehumanization of 'the other'"—exactly what Amnesty was refusing to do in adopting the cause of someone who preached intolerance. He also saw that the attempt to build a nation-state on the foundation of sharia was not drawn from the Koran, which, he points out, never mentions the words "law," "state," or "constitution." Those were European concepts that had been grafted onto Islam over the centuries. "Rather than justice—legal consistency—being derived from Islamism, Islamism relied on *Western*

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concepts of justice to get off the ground," he writes. "I buried my head in my hands as I slowly realized: we Islamists were the bastard children of colonialism." They had created an ideological chimera: a "political system inspired by modern European constructs, justified by seventh-century norms." The result, he realized, was monstrous.

And so Nawaz's third conversion:

Slowly and alone, I began to unpick the last thirteen years of my indoctrination, concept by concept. Ideas that I had once held sacrosanct were unraveling in my mind, revealed as crude political deceptions. My whole character would have to change.

This most recent remaking, he tells Harris, was a "long journey," but ultimately successful. Saved not only from one dogma or another but from absolutism itself, he joined with two other former members of H.T. to create a think tank focused on "counter-extremism." He recites the group's catechism to Harris after he tires of responding to the atheist's attempts to tar all of Islam with the most extreme passages from its scriptures:

Any given subject has multiple interpretations, which demonstrates that there's no *correct* one. If we can understand that, then we arrive at a respect for difference, which leads to tolerance and then pluralism, which in turn leads to democracy, secularism, and human rights.

His final (at least so far) conversion complete, possessed of sight where once he was blind, Nawaz has joined the apostles of modernity.

My conversion did not take. I wish I could say that I grasped the connection between faith and tyranny, and demurred on principle. But I think it is more likely that the charms of religion paled along with the charms of my girlfriend, or that I loved sex and drugs and intellectual freedom more than I loved her Master. In the meantime, I've been run over by a few more trains, but if they were dispatched from heaven, I was too hardheaded to notice, let alone to pick myself up and

climb on board. I've taken shelter from modern grotesqueries like scientism and patriotism in the Church of I Don't Know, where it is taught that we all have ideologies, but some stink less than others. I'm all for its central article of faith, sometimes maintained against all evidence, that our fate is in our own hands, even as this belief cuts us loose from any moorings in the transcendent.

But even the briefest and most callow turn to religion will show you what Nawaz's life story exemplifies, which Jacoby and Harris overlook, though it seems obvious: that every ideology, no matter how irreligious, entails faith. Some atheists are converts, Jacoby acknowledges, such as those who become fervent Communists, but the people who manage to resist absolutism are, she claims, simply being reasonable. They have adopted the ontology that any rational person who thinks things through would arrive at. "I do not consider the holders of [religious] beliefs stupid," she declares. "I think they are wrong." It's a peculiar inversion of Augustine's logic to insist that the religious are the ones who have failed to see the obvious—that God does not exist, and that "secularism, which is a way of acting ... on the atheist's conviction that human reason, not divine grace, is our best hope of improving life on earth."

But while we must at this point hope that human reason will see us through, and believe that without it we are unlikely to improve, only the most Whiggish reading of history can persuade us that the epiphanies of modernity are without deep and possibly fatal flaws; only faith can justify that hope. But "Whiggish" exactly describes Jacoby when she asserts that modern theocracies tell us "what the western world would have been like without the Enlightenment"—as if the Islamic State (or Saudi Arabia) evolved in a parallel universe and landed, fully formed, atop the unsuspecting modern world—or Harris when he tells Nawaz that "groups like the Islamic State and Al Qaeda are the common enemies of all humanity." Harris and Jacoby are both true believers, proselytes of atheism, no matter that they think their faith

is only common sense. They even have an eschatology.

But Al Qaeda and the Islamic State are not even reliably the enemies of Saudi Arabia, let alone of all humanity. They may well be enemies of the civilization out of which they arise, which we have arrived at through the haphazard, irrational, and ultimately unaccountable course of history. Harris and Jacoby decry the tendency, especially among liberals, to denounce critics who insist, as they both do, that Muslim extremism springs directly from religion, and Nawaz notes that the politically correct have been foolish in their "desperat[ion] not to offend" by refusing to denounce Islamism. But it is neither naïve nor tendentious to point out that secularism is not the culmination of human history, that its pathologies breed extremism at least as prolifically as the Koran does, and that the ravages of capitalism, nuclear war, and climate change—all products of reason—seem much more like common enemies of humanity than any religious person, even the most fanatical, could dream of becoming.

Civilizations fall. When Jacoby reminds us that "freedom of conscience ... is one of the greatest achievements of secular democracy," she means to remind us that this achievement is under assault by zealots who do not recognize its glory, who would convert us to a cause in which conscience would willingly surrender its freedom. And so it appears. But freedom of conscience, along with all the other convictions of secularism, is vulnerable for another, more disturbing reason: it is a human invention, one that is grounded in our incomplete understanding of ourselves and our world, which means that no matter how sublime it is, or how self-evident it seems, it is imperfect and sure to prove evanescent. When the civilization that invented it falls, it may happen not because Islamic barbarians storm its gates but because no matter how beautiful the edifice of our freedoms, its foundations are as shaky as anything else that we, as humans, can build. ■

CIRCLES AND LINES

John Wray's time machine

By Nick Richardson

Discussed in this essay:

The Lost Time Accidents, by John Wray. Farrar, Straus and Giroux. 512 pages. \$27. fsgbooks.com.



Waldemar “Waldy” Tolliver has been exiled from time, trapped at 8:47 “this” Monday morning in the library of a Harlem apartment that was once inhabited by his two maiden aunts. He has an armchair, a table, half a bottle of beer, paper, and a refillable tortoiseshell pen. Around him are piles of junk: newspapers, Game Boys, carburetors, assault rifles, and “chronometers of every make and model,

pendulums primed, springs oiled and wound, circuitry buzzing.” The book Waldy is writing, a history of his family and its fatal fixation on time, will turn out to have been John Wray’s new novel. At least initially, it looks like an energetic postmodern romp in the manner of recent books by David Mitchell, Ned Beaman, Jonathan Lethem, etc. It straddles the twentieth century (and our stub of the twenty-first), features a large cast, and plays with the conventions of genre fiction and the fuzzy line between genre and highbrow. “I’ll have to

treat my duration as a mystery and a sci-fi potboiler combined,” Waldy announces, before going on to treat it as a historical and epistolary novel too.

In June 1903, Waldy’s great-grandfather, a pickle magnate named Ottokar Toulà from the town of Znojmo, in Moravia, is run over and killed by a watch salesman. Ottokar had been engaged in “a series of experimental inquiries into the physical nature of time,” and when he arrives at the hospital after the crash a cryptic note addressed to his mistress is found in his pocket. Some of it seems to be in an alliterative code—“Bears boors & bohemians bedevil these lateral labors”—and it includes suggestive phrases: “Time can be measured only in its passing”; “Backwards time is impossible, forwards time is absurd.” Ottokar’s descendants, beginning with his two sons, Kaspar and Waldemar—the narrator’s namesake—become obsessed with figuring out what the note means, what Ottokar was after, and whether or not he found it. The brothers go to university in Vienna, where Waldemar gets absorbed in the hermetic world of chronology and becomes a recluse. Eventually, he thinks he’s grasped what his father was driving at, that time moves in circles, “chronospheres,” not straight lines, but before he gets the chance to publicize his discovery, Einstein comes out with the special theory of relativity, which invalidates it. Einstein’s triumph confirms Waldemar in his already pungent anti-Semitism. His research curdles into the conclusion that time is a Jewish conspiracy. He joins the Nazis, becomes a notorious interrogator in the Gestapo, and ends up a Josef Mengele-like mad scientist at a concentration camp, where he performs ghastly experiments on the inmates in the attempt to prove his theories. Kaspar, on the other hand, falls in love with Sonja, the daughter of a Jewish physics professor. They produce twin girls, whom they name Gentian and Enzian. When the Nazis come to power, Kaspar’s family escapes to Buffalo, New York, and changes its name to Tolliver. Sonja dies en route, but Kaspar builds a successful watchmaking business with her cousin, marries again, and has a son called Orson, the narrator’s father.

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Waldemar vanished from the camp at the end of the war. The disappearance burdened his family with the possibility that he may have been onto something—that he managed, perhaps, to escape justice by dislodging himself from the flow of time. Enzian and Gentian are strict Jews and read the Talmud to each other at bedtime, but they are sure that Waldemar has figured something out: Enzie studies physics at college, though she continues to refuse to speak the name of Einstein, whom she believes robbed her family of its place in the history books; Genny sets about curating an “archive” of objects relating to time—more or less everything, hence the piles of junk—in their apartment. Orson becomes a writer of sci-fi erotica as well as the author of *The Excuse*, a novel about the future that becomes popular in Age of Aquarius America—and a bestseller when some of the predictions it makes turn out to have been correct. It becomes the holy book of the United Church of Synchronology, a religious organization that reveres Orson as a prophet. Waldy, Orson’s son, has an affair with the wife of the church’s “First Listener” (a sort of cross between CEO and high priest) in the course of his own temporal investigations. Wray splices the story of their relationship with the story of the rest of Waldy’s family: where the two stories collide, the novel peaks, and the family’s secret—the secret behind their secret—is revealed.

Waldy’s vocabulary is thick with his family’s preoccupations even when he isn’t thinking about time. “You were trapped inside a Möbius loop of admirers” is how he describes his first encounter with the woman who will become his lover. Characters he meets seem equally obsessed: an old man at the nursing home where he works has memorized the average life span of everything from a rainbow trout to a football. Like the aunts’ apartment, Wray’s novel is stuffed with souvenirs of the past century. Scenes play out against a whirl of political moments, scientific and artistic breakthroughs, and wars. In Vienna, a salon hosted by Wittgenstein’s dad buzzes with word of Einstein’s latest theory. Sonja is a foul-mouthed revolutionary Communist who models for Klimt.

In New York, Waldy’s aunts become a fixture of 1960s hipsterdom, known for their extravagant dinner parties at which they play host to the likes of Eldridge Cleaver, Harry Smith, Carl Van Vechten, William F. Buckley Jr., Charles Mingus, and Buckminster Fuller. One of their guests is Joan Didion, whom Wray cheekily ventriloquizes:

It’s a pretty nice evening and not much is happening so someone suggests that we go see the Sisters. Not having any idea who the Sisters might be, I wonder aloud whether they won’t object—it’s past ten o’clock on a Wednesday—but LaMont waves my question aside. “They’re having one of their nights,” he says, as if that explains things.

At the end of *The Excuse*, Orson writes that “our consciousness is all the time machine we need,” a slogan that finds its way onto hippies’ T-shirts. Wray has fun with the notion, constantly probing the relationship between time and mind. Kaspar tells his brother that when he has sex with Sonja he feels as though time stands still. Waldemar misunderstands him and tries to borrow Sonja so that she can stop time for him too. Wray reminds us that we often think about our lives using the language of time travel, projecting ourselves into possible futures, posing what-ifs about the past. “What are you going to do, Mr. Tolliver?” the nursing-home guy asks the narrator. “Go back in time and kill your father’s uncle?” In a sense, that’s exactly what he intends.

Reading can transport the imagination back or forward in time; it can also accelerate our experience of time or slow it down, as Waldy discovers when holed up in an attic with almost nothing to read but *The Official World of Warcraft Game Guide*. Wray himself pulls off a fiddly piece of time wizardry by telling Waldy’s story alongside his family’s. The family story covers a hundred-odd years, Waldy’s barely thirty, but both take up about the same amount of space on the page, obliging the reader to experience narrative time at two velocities. Physical and literary time are conflated most dramatically in Enzie and Genny’s apartment, which Waldy realizes is a massive time machine. Waldy sits down in the middle of the apartment and starts to write; by giving him the

space in which to do so, the machine fulfills its function.

The *Lost Time Accidents* revisits the historical period in which Wray set his first novel, *The Right Hand of Sleep* (2001). That book tells the story of an Austrian man’s return to the village of his childhood after becoming a deserter during the First World War and spending years of semi-slavery on a Ukrainian collective farm. The Anschluss happens some way in, as it does in *The Lost Time Accidents*, but the style and tone of the two novels are different. *The Right Hand of Sleep* is a somewhat dutiful realist novel that was, on its release, flatteringly compared to Joseph Roth. It opens in October 1917 and shuffles toward the outbreak of the Second World War and a denouement that most readers will have seen coming from about page fifty. *The Lost Time Accidents*, by contrast, is frantically paced and unpredictable, and instills the reader with a sense of urgency from the get-go—about Ottokar and Waldemar’s “breakthrough,” and then about Waldy’s confrontation with his diabolical ancestor. This is the first sentence of *The Right Hand of Sleep*: “A boy came out of the house first, the crumbling, sun-yellowed house with the dark tiles and ivied sides, the peaked roof and sandstone steps down which he went stiffly, nervously, adjusting the plaid schoolboy’s backpack on his shoulders.” Here’s the opening of *The Lost Time Accidents*: “Dear Mrs. Haven—This morning, at 08:47 EST, I woke up to find myself excused from time.” The former leaves nothing to chance; the latter, in far fewer syllables, introduces a set of mysteries and stakes its success on their resolution.

Wray has declared himself untroubled by his lack of a consistent authorial voice: “I’m not a big adherent of the ‘find your voice’ school,” he admitted in an interview shortly after the publication of his third novel, *Lowboy* (2009). “I don’t actually believe that we’re all somehow born with some voice that’s inherently ours.” He has also spoken of his admiration for film directors such as Stanley Kubrick and Billy Wilder, who could “go from directing a thriller to a period piece to a romantic comedy without missing a step”—and said he had set out to imitate their versatility. *Canaan’s Tongue* (2005), Wray’s second novel and

another period piece, switched the dappled nostalgia of Old Europa for the heat of the American South in the nineteenth century, and the cast of Mitteleuropeans for a vibrant jangle of Southern dialects—Twain looms large as an influence, as does Poe. With *Lowboy*, Wray reinvented himself again, as both a thriller writer and a visionary surrealist. The novel follows a paranoid schizophrenic teenager, who has escaped from a hospital, as he travels around New York on the subway. He has stopped taking his medication, and Wray's prose mirrors his increasing mental disorder. At the novel's climax, the escapee, Will, tells his girlfriend about a florid psychotic episode he experienced. The text here is doubly mad—a mentally ill man's account of the most extreme phase of his illness—and Burroughsian in its mix of body horror and narcotized syntax:

Every day the world got flatter like a pancake or a candle on the dashboard of a car. Everything in the world was made of paper. I woke up one night with paper in my mouth and paper stretched across the room and light blue paper on me like a dress.... The ceiling came and brushed against my face it wasn't painful but it was difficult to watch. Things kept on moving. The nurses for example. But how did they keep from sliding into each other ... how did they keep from tearing themselves up.

For all Wray's stylistic side-switching, his books share a certain kind of protagonist: one who is in some way out of step with his society, and whose alienation affords him a privileged perspective on the events of the story. Wray—who has been in his time a cab driver, groundskeeper, tutor, and rock musician, and who dropped out of two creative-writing programs—appears to feel a kinship with the anomic. Thaddeus Morelle, the Southern outlaw at the center of *Canaan's Tongue*, is a moral relativist, a skeptic contemptuous of the faith and optimism of his countrymen, which he exploits for his own ends: "This nation was founded on belief—credulity pure and simple.... Without an understanding of belief—without a sympathy for it, a talent for it—you will never make your penny." In *The Right Hand of Sleep*, Oskar Voxlauer is granted a more rounded view of his country's political situation because his life has liberated him from ideology. His

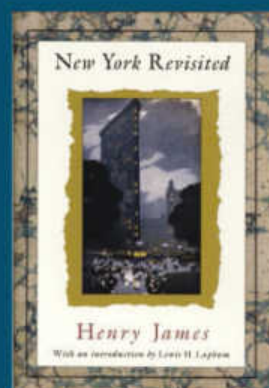
time as a soldier in the First World War led him to ditch his father's kaiserism; his subsequent zeal for Communism is lost when he is sent to a labor camp along with his girlfriend, who has been charged with being a kulak; and his absence from Austria means that he can see Nazism for the pathology it is. In *Lowboy*, Will's condition leads him to believe that the earth is getting hotter and that, as a result, the world is going to end. He is, of course, absolutely right: it's our complacency that's peculiar. In each of Wray's novels, the central character's outsider status colors the language of the book and sets up its central drama: Will's condition imbues the writing with visionary weirdness, whereas Waldy's exclusion from time enables him to produce the novel we're reading and to face up to the other Waldemar.

Wray draws discreet connections between *The Lost Time Accidents* and *The Right Hand of Sleep*. For one thing, he gives a minor character in *The Lost Time Accidents* the name Ryslavy, which is also the name of a Jewish barkeeper in *The Right Hand of Sleep* who is forced out of his home by the Nazis. In both books, the Nazis' sanctioning of anti-Semitism poisons communities, turning former friends and family members against one another. Villagers who have been drinking happily at Ryslavy's for years suddenly begin to suspect him of all kinds of underhandedness. Waldemar's anti-Semitism commits him to disowning his brother after his marriage to Sonja. Though Ottokar is a Christian, Wray casts doubt on the Teutonicity of his heritage, describing his beard as one that "demands to be described as Talmudic" and underscoring the absurdity of ethnic segregation in a community that is so intermixed.

The two books, however, characterize their Nazis very differently. Kurt, the most prominent Nazi in *The Right Hand of Sleep*, is hardly sympathetic, but Wray takes care to explain how he turned out the way he did. He lived with an abusive, alcoholic uncle, and he gets a long flashback sequence in which he describes his daring escape from the scene of Chancellor Dollfuss's assassination, followed by his lonely rise through the party. His longing for a father figure is met by his superiors, including Himmler, who possesses a look of "schoolteacherly attentiveness." The older Waldemar, on

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the other hand, from the moment of his father's death, is monstrous, a caricature, a loon. His nickname, the Black Timekeeper of Czas, elicits a pulp-fiction frisson. He believes that "sequential time is a convenient fiction, an item of propaganda—a fable propagated from the birth of Jesus outward by a collective of interests." He means the Jews, who are now "approximately one thousand, nine hundred and five times more powerful than they were at the beginning of the so-called Christian Era." When Waldy finally gets to confront him, he finds the Black Timekeeper to be unrepentant, still inclined to view humans as "test subjects." Waldemar the narrator may be the first of his family with enough distance between himself and his ancestors' crimes to be able to reckon with them, but he is still unable to comprehend the Black Timekeeper as fully human. This isn't a failing of the novel, it's a failing that Waldy shares with all of us who find it difficult to square the actions of Waldemar and Mengele with their humanity. Like us, Waldy can only comprehend them as monstrous.

Fredric Jameson recently wrote in the *London Review of Books* that the time-travel narrative is "pre-eminently suitable for its use in ideological interpellation." A time-travel scenario, he suggests, allows an author to situate different historical (and future-historical) periods alongside one another, making plain the advantages and disadvantages of both—a utopian past versus a dystopian present, or a dystopian present versus a utopian future. Wray has no discernible ideological agenda, but his characters do. The myth of their family's ability to time travel—or to crack the riddle of Ottokar's note—is a protective screen, a way of papering over Waldemar's appalling crimes. Enzie and Genny bury themselves in their experiments and their archive; Orson escapes into his novels, and then into the self-delusory pseudo-pomp of his position as head of the Church of Synchronology. It's up to Waldy to journey into the past and "close the circle." In its final quarter, *The Lost Time Accidents* begins to feel more somber, less romplike. It becomes a book about guilt and about storytelling as a means to obscure and address that guilt. ■

THE HUNGER ARTIST

The appetites of M.F.K. Fisher

By Bee Wilson

Discussed in this essay:

The Arrangement, by Ashley Warlick. Viking. 320 pages. \$26.
penguinrandomhouse.com.

The Theoretical Foot, by M.F.K. Fisher. Counterpoint. 304 pages. \$25.
counterpointpress.com.



lished more than thirty books during a career spanning five and a half decades—the prose exhilarates anew. She proved that non-fiction can be as personal and true as fiction, if not more so. Her voice is as clean and decisive as scissors snipping chives, and the relish is all her own: she is, as one of her books announced, the "Gastronomical Me."

It is surprising, therefore, to discover that Fisher believed she was writing not for herself but for someone else. "I have to write towards somebody I love," she said to Ruth Reichl, then a young freelance writer who in-

"I have eaten several strange things since I was twelve, and I shall be glad to taste broiled locusts and swallow a live fish. But unless I change very much, I shall never be able to eat a slug." The only person who could have written these words was M.F.K. Fisher. There is a subtle energy to her writing, the atmosphere of which has never been replicated, though many have tried. Was anyone ever so delightfully confident of herself on the page? Each time you return to Fisher's food writing—she pub-

interviewed her for a 1981 *Ms.* magazine article. The interview took place in Last House, on Bouverie Ranch near Sonoma, California, which was indeed Fisher's last house—she lived there from 1971 until her death, in 1992, at the age of eighty-three. The great food writer—now silver-haired—prepared a modest lunch of split-pea soup and answered most of Reichl's questions about her writing with "Did I say that?" or "I don't know." But when Reichl asked if she wrote for herself, she looked horrified. The answer was an unequivocal no. "It's like kissing yourself, don't you think?"

Bee Wilson is the author, most recently, of *First Bite: How We Learn to Eat* (Basic Books).

She knew that there was something shocking about her own hunger, and the ease with which she both displayed and satisfied it. That ease was the opposite of how Americans—especially women—were expected to behave toward food. Fisher once noted how upset it made people to see her alone in a restaurant, wearing lipstick and freely ordering good wines and anything else she fancied. Such faith in her own tastes and company made others anxious:

Women are puzzled, which they hate to be, and jealous of the way I am served, with such agreeable courtesy, and of what I am eating and drinking, which is almost never the sort of thing they order for themselves. And men are puzzled too, in a more personal way. I anger them as males.

Those of us who love M.F.K. Fisher above all other food writers can sympathize with this. We watch in wonder at her goddamned self-assurance. W. H. Auden once said, “I do not know of anyone in the United States today who writes better prose.” She does not soften her views to suit our tastes but serves them forth—as the title of her first book has it—in the certitude that what she is feeding us is good.

When *Serve It Forth* was published, in 1937, Fisher hoped for riches—“to hell with esteem,” as she wrote to a friend. Instead, the book enjoyed critical success without huge sales. The *New York Times* pronounced it “unique.” Fisher was only twenty-nine and yet she writes as though there is nothing she doesn’t know, including medieval recipes for swan and the best drinks to have when you are about to die. “Now I am going to write a book,” she announces in the introduction. “It will be about eating and about what to eat and about people who eat.” *Serve It Forth* is about all that, but it also covers her gnawing childhood hunger, an ancient Roman fish sauce, and a French butcher named César. It is about marriage and friendship and “the worst apricot tarts that ever sogged and stuck in the throat.” Throughout, there is a miraculous air of brightness, like a salad sprinkled with slivers of orange rind (one of the many delicacies to which she introduces us).

Many authors whisper, as though to a diary, or chat, as though to a

friend, but Fisher communicates with the heady directness of a lover. She writes to confide her secret delights and to impress someone with her mastery of the table. That someone was the person she named Chexbres in her writing, an allusion to a small Swiss village near the house where they once lived together. His real name was Dillwyn Parrish, though his friends all called him Tim.

To understand Fisher’s voice, especially in her early writing, you need to know that she was writing away from one love and toward another. The “we” of *Serve It Forth* refers to Mary Frances (the K was for Kennedy, her family name) and her husband, Al Fisher, the dependable but introspective academic with whom she lived in Dijon while he studied for his doctorate. Mary Frances had met Al in the library at UCLA. He was a recent graduate, and she was trying to make up credits over the summer after flunking her first semester of college. At twenty, she was already a seasoned writer, having turned out quick pieces for her father’s newspaper, the *Whittier News*. But she only found her true subjects—French food and herself—when she married Al and moved to France.

With Al, Mary Frances first discovered airy potato soufflé and musty gingerbread that smelled of “honey, cow dung, clove.” For Al she bought cauliflower, cooking them in heavy cream and Gruyère in a wide casserole. In her writing, the relationship with Al anchors almost all of her happy memories of France and its magical ways of eating. “We lived, once, above a little pastry shop.” “We drank too much” tea with a “homesick Turkish lawyer.” “We smelled Dijon mustard, especially at the corner where Grey-Poupon flaunts little pots of it.”

But the “you” for whom Fisher parades these memories is someone different. The Fishers met Tim and Gigi Parrish in the early 1930s. Al and Mary Frances had run out of money and returned from Dijon to California, where they lived in her parents’ beach house in Laguna. The Parrishes were neighbors. Gigi was a glamorous film actress for Samuel Goldwyn, and Tim—who was much older than Gigi, with whom he had fallen in love while tutoring her

when she was only thirteen—was an artist from a moneyed family. A fidgety, creative extrovert, he owned a tea salon, and his interests ranged from illustrating children’s books to writing screenplays and novels. To the Fishers, who were going slightly crazy with boredom and frustration after having left France behind, the company of the Parrishes was a tonic.

Tim and Gigi came often to dinner, and after everyone had eaten, Mary Frances would share snippets of the culinary essays she was working on. Al encouraged her in these writings, but the person who seemed most amused was Tim. She later described him as someone who could “draw out anything creative in other people.” A curious form of seduction started to take place on the page. Once Parrish became part of her life, Fisher stopped writing in her journal and instead poured her best self into food essays aimed at Tim. She wrote her first gastronomic articles (which would later become *Serve It Forth*) with the cozy security that she was still loved by Al, but they were spiced with the excitement and urgency that came from trying to please someone new.

Perhaps it was only a matter of time before someone fictionalized this strange *modus vivendi*. *The Arrangement*, by Ashley Warlick, turns the story of the Fisher–Parrish ménage into a romantic novel. In the opening scene, Tim and Mary Frances (who has just published her first essay) are drinking cold Gibsons at a California restaurant, on the brink of an affair. Warlick presents this as the moment that Mary Frances became M.F.K.:

Tim raised his glass. “To Mary Frances Fisher. Her first publication.”

“M.F.K. Fisher. It’s M.F.K. Fisher.”
“Really.”

Tim and Mary Frances fell in love, and Gigi left for someone else. But there remained a triangle, in which Al played the third party for a surprisingly long time. He turned a blind eye when his wife traveled with Tim and his mother for months in Europe, with Mary Frances supposedly meant to be a companion for the elderly Mrs. Parrish. Then Tim invited Mary Frances and Al to come live with him at Le Paquis, his house in Switzerland.



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Sometimes Al and Tim drank beer together in the evenings, sometimes Al popped out in the morning to buy brioche for breakfast; Mary Frances cooked meals for them all, using vegetables from the kitchen garden. On visits, her parents noticed that Tim seemed to be a close friend, but they did not spot anything amiss.

Yet all the while, the love affair between Tim and Mary Frances continued. The setup sounds exhausting. As Fisher wrote in 1937, "I wanted love, but I was tired of it, wearied by its involutions, convolutions, its complex intraplexities." In her writing, she turned from the messiness of love to the reassuring certainty of food. She recorded in an essay that she kept whispering the words "flagons and apples" to herself. It was a reference to the Song of Solomon: "Stay me with flagons, comfort me with apples: for I am sick of love."

It is brave to write a fictional account of one of the twentieth century's most distinguished prose stylists. In the scenes involving food, it feels as though Warlick might pull it off. She has absorbed Fisher's knack for vivid, sensual descriptions and imagines her cooking dishes such as a stew of eggplant or "a mortar of green pounded herbs." While Al is away, she eats solitary meals of shad roe on toast or celery hearts with "a quick yellow mayonnaise." On Fisher's return to Dijon with Tim, Warlick pictures her tipping back half a dozen oysters and "a short cold beer," the "rattle of Dijonnaise around her like the beat of wings in a coop."

Food is one thing; it is quite another to conjure the personality who eats it. The problem with *The Arrangement* is that Warlick's Mary Frances never really feels like the poised, intelligent Fisher we think we know so intimately. How could she, when she is characterized in a different, and much more conventional, register? The absence of the real M.F.K. feels particularly acute in those sections that overlap with her writing. In "The Standing and the Waiting," one of the most memorable chapters in *Serve It Forth*, Mary Frances returns to Aux Trois Faisans, her and Al's favorite restaurant in Dijon, but this time, six years later, she visits with Chexbres. "Would the dishes be as exciting, as satisfying? Would the wine still be the best wine?" Fisher

wonders. She quickly sees that things have changed. The tablecloth is stained, and Charles, once the "perfect waiter," is now drunk and spilling the soup. Slowly the evening improves. They sip marc (which tastes "like smouldering fire") and talk of architecture. At the end of the meal, they discover that Charles was let go that morning, and that theirs was the last meal he would ever serve. "Chexbres took my hand gently, and pointed to the roofs, coloured tiles, Burgundian, drained of their colour now, but plainly patterned. I began to cry."

In Warlick's novel, this profoundly elegiac piece of writing about the passage of time is turned into a workaday date night. The drama of Charles's dismissal takes second billing to dull love talk between Mary Frances and Tim. When she becomes sad after the meal, "Tim gathered her in his arms, pressing her cheek to his. 'My dear. It's okay,'" he says, to which she replies, "But, Tim. I wanted this so much. And now there's nothing." It's hard to imagine the real Fisher talking in such a wooden fashion.

Then again, even Fisher struggled to write about her relationship with Tim in fiction. *The Theoretical Foot*, her long-lost novel, which was begun in 1938 and remained unpublished for nearly eight decades, should be a thrilling proposition. In the book, Mary Frances Fisher has become Sara Porter, an elegant woman who is a wonderful cook. Tim Garton is her lover, a man with a fine, "goat-like" face whom everyone seems to admire. Though they are in love, they are still married to other people back in America. They host a group of friends at their beautiful Swiss farmhouse (clearly modeled on Le Paquis) in late summer. These include Honor and Daniel Tennant, two college students based on Fisher's siblings, Norah and David Kennedy; Joe Kelly, a Rhodes scholar, and his girlfriend, Sue, another young American couple; and Lucy Pendleton, a small-minded painter who casts judgment on everyone else in the house. Finally, there is Nan Garton Temple, a poet, who is excessively close to her younger brother. Nan was identifiable as Anne Parrish, a children's author. On reading the manuscript, Anne took

offense, and Fisher decided against publication. A couple of years later, she changed her mind, but her publisher rejected the manuscript.

The novel has a curious structure. The uneventful story of the houseguests is interspersed with six mysterious and seemingly unconnected passages in which a man's leg is amputated and he suffers hallucinatory pain. These passages make sense only if you know how Tim Parrish's story ended. In the autumn of 1938, after a night of dancing at Le Paquis, he experienced terrible pain in one of his legs. The cause was Buerger's disease, a condition that leads to thrombosis of the blood vessels. Two weeks later, his leg was amputated. He and Mary Frances eventually sold Le Paquis and moved to California. In 1941, after the disease progressed further, Tim shot himself.

When Fisher wrote her novel, she and Tim were dealing with the aftermath of his amputation. They had been suddenly dislocated from the happy, sybaritic life of food and love and cultured conversation that they had been enjoying at Le Paquis. In the novel, Fisher seems unable or unwilling to connect the drama of the leg with the houseguests. Perhaps the intention was for those passages to function as a memento mori, like the mosaics of skeletons that reminded diners in Pompeii that all feasts must come to an end.

In the novel's main story, the characters have a series of emotional crises and they eat a series of lovely meals, which culminate in a feast of pigeon:

They ate little roasted cold pigeons and dug into a magnificent aspic all atremble with carrots and radishes and slices of cucumber cut like stars and moons.... The wine was rich and ripe and slid warmly down their various throats in different ways.

In passages such as these, Fisher is as sensuous and wise as we expect her to be. Her writing gives hunger a luminous exactness.

What she is not so good at, surprisingly, considering the psychological acuity of her food writing, is inhabiting the inner lives of her characters. Here is how she imagines the thought processes of Daniel, who is based on her younger brother:

"Tim Garton was a *real man*, that was it. That was why Tim was probably the most important person in the world." This is Nan: "I, Nan Garton, the bird woman, the frail spirit who lives on one almond and a sliver of ripe peach, am *starved!*" The only character who really comes alive is the dreadful Lucy Pendleton, whose story allows Fisher to explore the emotional potency of eating. After days of attempting to deny herself food and subsist on black coffee, and feeling disapproval toward those with less self-control, Lucy breaks into the pantry and gorges on mayonnaise and toast sticks, "ravenously dipping them into the thick rich yellow sauce and eating them in big untidy bites."

Perhaps the most interesting aspect of *The Theoretical Foot* is that Fisher makes no attempt to present the thoughts of the character she based on herself. We are told many things about Sara in the course of the novel: that she is beautiful and self-possessed, that she washes salad, that she has green eyes, that she dances languorously, that she hates necklaces, that she "loved passionately," that she makes all clothes look elegant, that she exclaims with pleasure when Tim opens a bottle of Gevrey-Chambertin from 1929. But we are never given access to Sara's mind. She remains as hidden as the kernel in an apricot stone.

The main virtue of this disappointing novel is to remind us again of the astonishing achievement of M.F.K. Fisher's culinary works. In her biography of Fisher, *An Extravagant Hunger*, Anne Zimmerman noted that the essays were prized for "tales so indulgent, they read like fiction." In fact, the voice that Fisher achieved was far more intimate and declarative than most fiction, including her own. Nothing very special happened when she wrote about herself and Tim with the omniscience of a narrator. It was her "I" that had such power, the "I" who spoke to her lover of her private joy in peeling tangerines and roasting them on paper on a hot radiator in Strasbourg and saving the "secret section" at the heart for Al. She was blowing kisses at Tim, but we are the lucky ones who catch them. ■

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LETTERS

Continued from page 3

repeatedly stressed that “Assad must go” and supported armed opposition forces as a means to that end, it is hard to see why eschewing direct military intervention indicated a contrary policy. The United States and Saudi Arabia have pursued the same policy in Syria. This is confirmed not merely by their public statements; as I revealed in my article, the United States actively enabled Saudi arms supplies to flow to that country’s jihadist proxies. The loud complaints last fall that Russia was bombing “CIA-backed moderates” (who were embedded with an Al Qaeda coalition) on the front lines against Assad’s forces give the lie to assertions that we were interested only in fighting the Islamic State.

Last Request

I hope that after reading Brooke Jarvis’s article about the life and death of Peter Rasmussen [“When I Die,” Letter from Oregon, January], your readers will be stimulated to have important conversations with their loved ones about what they value in their lives and what they think they might want during their final days on this planet. Such poignant discussions are the highest form of caring for one another. As one of the professionals who worked closely with Dr. Rasmussen during his medical career, I can attest to the fact that he was a master at encouraging such discussions and honoring the wishes of his patients whenever possible.

Joan Stembridge
Salem, Ore.

Heavy Burden

As the executive producer of both *Extreme Weight Loss* and *The Biggest Loser*, I know that millions of people struggling with obesity are unhealthy, living in pain and fear, and hurting on the inside. Their size actually allows us to see their pain and lack of hope. Our shows provide this hope and prove that, with love, it’s possible to change course and lead a happier, more satisfying life. That’s why Moody’s characterization of *Extreme Weight Loss* [“Slender Mercies,” Criticism, December] as a “weed species in the garden of American entertainment” is so offensive—and so wrong.

We preach hard work, health, fitness, and commitment to living the best life possible. The real “weed” in the garden is the attitude that a kid abused by his father doesn’t deserve to love himself or to be loved. To belittle what that kid achieved in just one short year is to ignore his pain. We provide a much-needed service that, frankly, is missing in society. I’m sure everyone—including Moody—has a friend, relative, or co-worker who is overweight and suffering. Rather than “criticism,” you’d be better serving up some compassion.

J. D. Roth
Executive Producer, *Extreme Weight Loss*
Manhattan Beach, Calif.

Rick Moody responds:

It’s easy to imagine that, having given one’s professional life to producing weight-loss television programming, as J. D. Roth apparently has done, one might be a bit oversensitive about popular attitudes toward the genre. But professional sensitivity should not lead one to rush into an impassioned letter about an “offensive” article on the subject with-

out closely reading said article. At no point did I write that *Extreme Weight Loss*, a program I have loved fervently for its entire history, was a “weed species.” I did say that “weight-loss programming is a weed species,” but I did so in the context of enumerating the preconceptions that might make it hard for someone to understand just how great *Extreme Weight Loss* really is. I then wrote another 3,000 words arguing that *Extreme Weight Loss* is incredibly moving, earnest, valiant, and, in fact, spiritual in its orientation.

In a similar fashion, Roth suggests that my essay “belittled” Bruce Pitcher, who was physically abused by his father. What I actually said was, “Television is rarely as genuine as the minute of screen time devoted to Bruce Pitcher’s testimony” at his father’s parole hearing.

I welcome being reminded by Roth that there are real people suffering with food addiction and weight-loss issues. As a person with an addictive illness myself, I wrote what I wrote because of my compassion for food addicts and for addicts in general. Perhaps a closer reading of my article would support this point.

Rick Moody
Astoria, N.Y.

Correction

Because of a production error, two sentences in “A Radioactive Money Pit” [M. V. Ramana and Sajan Saini, Annotation, February] were printed incorrectly. The sentences, from the third paragraph, should read, “Nuclear plants like Vogtle are in a class by themselves, with costs of \$97 to \$136 per megawatt-hour—and the difference is growing. Lazard estimates that wind and solar power have become 61 percent and 82 percent cheaper since 2009.” We regret the error.

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PUZZLE

QUO VADIS?

By Richard E. Maltby Jr.

Each of the four quadrants in the diagram includes six interlocked seven-letter words. The quadrants themselves are linked by four fifteen-letter words. Solvers are to determine which quadrant is which and where each of the answers is to be placed. To ensure that there is only one configuration, the first fifteen-letter answer is an across entry.

Clue answers include one proper noun. As always, mental repunctuation of a clue is the key to its solution. The solution to last month's puzzle appears on page 61.

FIFTEEN-LETTER WORDS

1. Frank: a gay soccer team won't hire him!
2. She invoices sums, concealing monkey business
3. Solving the problem when basketball player has this?
4. Communication, if CEO reconvened organization?

SEVEN-LETTER WORDS

QUADRANT A

5. Here's the dish: knight is back to going both ways
6. Cannabis, you are it! It's found by the pound!
7. Makes new catalogues for big hotels
8. Mass movement gone crazy—there's rot in it!
9. Drag out gag that appears on street
10. How Italians keep their cool and not riot when provoked

QUADRANT B

11. Squabble's royal focal point: putting underwear on backward
12. Exercises that are the same going up or down?
13. Pitt abs developed by one immersed in worship?
14. A tropical theme plays cleverly in *Company*
15. I'm a fruit—get out of the office!
16. Material that's sized for two male animals

QUADRANT C

17. Brought to victory, Roman four does, coming back around
18. Unbounded and friendless but not at the end of the week!
19. Plays with dialogue—initially I would bring up Rosebud, e.g.
20. Diverse characters in a new edition
21. Northern riots broken up, left where there's a passing of wind
22. Harmful Burma-Shave writing?

QUADRANT D

23. Strange Latvian game
24. In Italy, everything from three on is late!
25. Makes lower classes well-spoken?
26. One dangerously wild flower in the Mideast, they say
27. Contract to form brigade
28. Find us tragically enthralled by housecleaner? Just the opposite!

Contest Rules: Send completed diagram with name and address to "Quo Vadis?" *Harper's Magazine*, 666 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10012. If you already subscribe to *Harper's*, please include a copy of your latest mailing label. Entries must be received by March 11. The sender of the first correct solution opened at random will receive a one-year subscription to *Harper's Magazine* (limit one winner per household per year). The winner's name will be printed in the May issue. The winner of the January puzzle, "House of Cards," is Marshall E. Deutsch, Sudbury, Mass.



FINDINGS

Conservative voters value deep voices and square jaws, whereas liberal voters prefer feminine faces. Government instability leads both white and black Americans to favor light-skinned politicians. Dying black people may prefer heroic lifesaving measures over palliative care because of doctors' relatively colder body language toward them. Female subjects spend less time hugging virtual fat men than virtual fat women. Women with desirable male mates avoid interactions with women who are ovulating. Women who were on hormonal birth control when they met their male partners exhibit greater desire for those partners during pregnancy. Embryos for I.V.F. may be grown in a vagina. The presence or lack of erotic audiovisuals was associated with differing patterns of spinal-cord arousal in women who stimulated themselves with custom MRI-compatible vibrators. The hot hand may not be a fallacy.

Concerns about plagiarism led Romania to announce that it would stop offering thirty-day sentence reductions for each scientific paper a prisoner wrote. U.S. prisons are compromised by guard presenteeism. The insurgency phase of the Iraq War increased rates of PTSD in American servicemen but not in servicewomen. Neurosurgeons using the Glasgow Outcome Scale at the Elvis Presley Memorial Trauma Center evaluated the validity of the St. Louis Scale for Pediatric Gunshot Wounds to the Head. A researcher at the University of Maryland found that "high-school football players, regardless of concussions, who drank Fifth Quarter Fresh chocolate milk during the season showed positive results

overall." Forensic scientists advised biological anthropologists on the study of ancient child abuse. Chimpanzees will tug ropes to collapse the food tables of other chimps only to punish grave social infractions, but capuchins will sabotage others merely for having more food than they do. Materialistic consumers with poor human relationships prefer anthropomorphic "servant" brands over which they can exert control. The Sport Shopper thrives on a sense of mastery.

The falcons of Mogador may pluck the flight and tail feathers of small birds and imprison them in crevasses for later consumption. Australian biologists trained monitor lizards not to eat cane toads. Fish flavoring may cause feline hyperthyroidism. An Idaho mountain lion that was shot was discovered to have teeth on the back of its head. A snake that was run over on a Kyrgyz road is a new species of pit viper. Style guides have endangered the relative pronoun "which." India sought lentil self-sufficiency. Caterpillars zombified by parasitoid wasps eat more carbs. Medication allowed a seventy-three-year-old man with a history of extravagance, hoarding, and promiscuity to stop believing that "the personality or psychic core of his cat had been replaced." A woman with multiple personalities was cured of her blindness in some personalities but not in others. Those with attachment anxiety experience more phantom phone rings. Washington, D.C., was found to be an extreme outlier for its high rate of firearm-homicide deaths, Maryland for deaths by syphilis, and Rhode Island for deaths by events of undetermined intent. ■

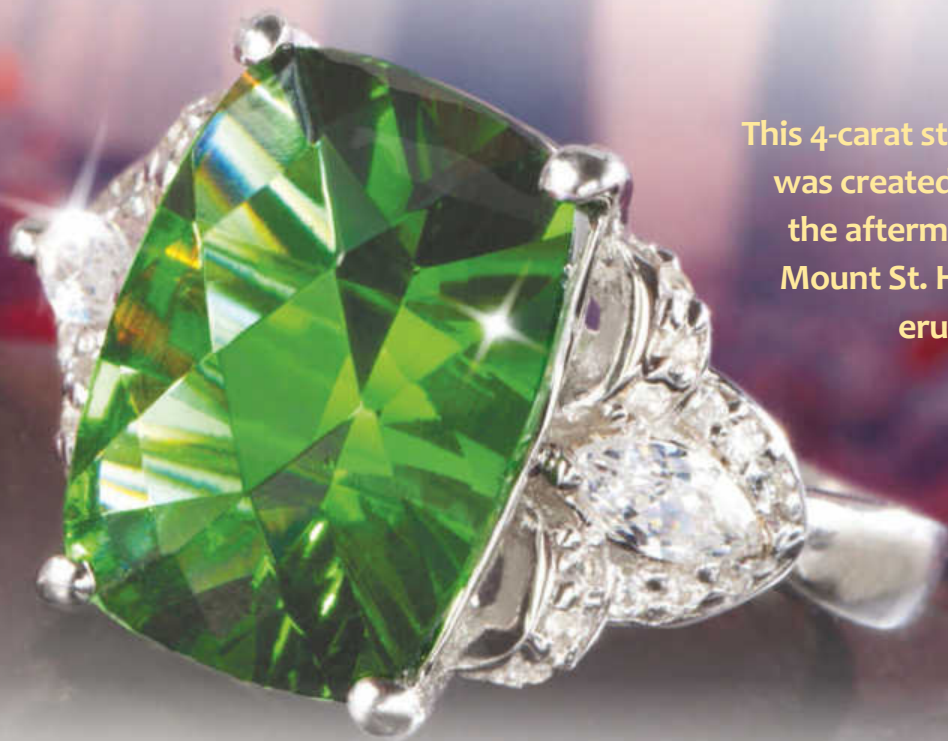
"Tumbleweed (Silverbell Road)," "Tumbleweed (Twin Peaks Road)," and "Tumbleweed (Sandario Road)," hand-tinted photographs by Kate Breaker. Courtesy the artist, Stephen L. Clark Gallery, Austin, Texas; Etherton Gallery, Tucson, Arizona; and Littlejohn Contemporary, New York City

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